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Teaching Workload and Occupational Strain: A Study of Teachers in Salug II District, Schools Division of Zamboanga Del Norte

Marie Joy T. Cavan, MAEM
Teacher, Department of Education, Zamboanga del Norte, Philippines

Leo C. Naparota, PhD
Dean, School of Criminal Justice Education and College of Arts and Sciences, Andres Bonifacio College, Inc., Dipolog City, Philippines

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ABSTRACT: This study aimed to determine the impact of teaching workload on teachers' occupational strain in Salug II District, Schools Division of Zamboanga del Norte, during School Year 2025–2026. The respondents of the study were the 105 teacher-respondents from the district, selected through total enumeration. The study utilized the survey and descriptive-correlational research methods, with a questionnaire as the main instrument. The data were analyzed using weighted mean, standard deviation, and Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient. Teachers reported a very high overall workload (AWV = 4.64, SD = 0.333), while their overall occupational strain was high (AWV = 3.46, SD = 0.866), with physical strain (AWV = 3.68) higher than emotional strain (AWV = 3.24). Teachers' overall workload was not significantly related to overall occupational strain (rho = 0.046, p = 0.641). Based on the findings, the study concluded that teachers in Salug II District carry multiple workload demands and experience high occupational strain, particularly physical strain. Although overall workload did not significantly predict overall occupational strain, specific duties such as non-teaching activities and support/management responsibilities contributed to teachers' bodily fatigue and discomfort. The study recommends that DepEd officials strengthen workload rationalization, reduce repetitive reporting requirements, improve data systems, and support teacher wellness and ergonomics. School heads may equitably redistribute non-teaching tasks, provide practical instructional resources, and implement school-based wellness initiatives.

KEYWORDS: teaching workload, lesson planning, classroom management, non-teaching activities, differentiated instruction, occupational strain, physical strain, emotional strain, Zamboanga del Norte, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Teachers today carry a workload that extends well beyond classroom instruction lesson planning, checking and feedback, documentation, and other school-related tasks which often compress time and intensify daily work pressure that can accumulate into occupational strain (e.g., stress and emotional exhaustion). In the global context, evidence shows that work demands such as time pressure are closely linked with teacher strain outcomes; Maas et al. (2021) reported that teachers' perceived time pressure is strongly associated with emotional exhaustion, demonstrating how intensified workload can translate into depletion and fatigue. Similarly, Shen et al. (2025) found that extra-administrative workload at the school level significantly and positively predicts teachers' emotional exhaustion, highlighting that added non-teaching requirements can heighten occupational strain. In the local (Philippine) context, public-school teachers also manage extensive documentation and reporting requirements alongside instructional responsibilities, making workload rationalization and teacher well-being persistent concerns in school operations and policy implementation. Within this context, examining teachers in Salug II District, Schools Division of Zamboanga del Norte, is essential to generate localized evidence on the level of workload across instructional and non-instructional domains and how these demands relate to teachers' physical and emotional strain.

Occupational strain among teachers refers to the physical and psychological wear that develops when persistent work demands exceed teachers' time, energy, and coping resources, often presenting as fatigue, musculoskeletal discomfort, stress, and emotional exhaustion. Recent evidence shows that workload-related pressures are closely linked to strain outcomes in the teaching profession: Maas et al. (2021) found that teachers' perceived time pressure is strongly associated with emotional exhaustion, indicating that compressed time and intensified daily demands can drain teachers' emotional resources. Extending this perspective beyond emotional outcomes, Madigan and Kim (2023) synthesized evidence that teacher burnout is consistently related to physical health problems and somatic complaints (e.g., headaches, illness, voice disorders), underscoring that occupational strain in teaching is both psychological and bodily in nature. Taken together, these findings highlight the importance of examining occupational strain in teachers to inform workplace supports, wellness initiatives, and workload management strategies that protect teacher well-being and sustain effective instruction.

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Understanding teaching workload and occupational strain matters because teacher well-being is not only a personal health concern but also a system-level issue linked to workforce stability and educational quality. Studying workload and strain is important because teacher well-being influences workforce stability, instructional quality, and the sustainability of reforms. The OECD (2020) emphasizes that teachers' working conditions including workload and work-related well-being are central to understanding the attractiveness and functioning of the profession across systems. At the same time, UNESCO (2025) stresses that addressing conditions affecting teachers is crucial amid global teacher shortages, reinforcing the need for evidence that can guide supportive policies and school-level interventions.

Empirically, the relationship between the variables is expected to be direct: as teaching workload increases, teachers are more likely to experience occupational strain (e.g., stress, exhaustion, burnout symptoms) because prolonged high demands reduce opportunities for recovery and intensify pressure. The relationship between the variables is therefore expected to be direct and meaningful: heavier teaching workload tends to increase occupational strain because sustained job demands reduce recovery time and elevate pressure. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2021) found that time pressure functioned as a strong predictor of emotional exhaustion, supporting the idea that workload-related demands can drive strain over time. Extending this, Creagh et al. (2025) synthesize evidence showing that workload and work intensification contribute to "time poverty," with negative implications for teachers' health and well-being clarifying why workload increases are closely tied to strain outcomes.

Despite growing recognition that heavy teaching workload contributes to occupational strain, a clear context-specific gap remains for teachers in Salug II District, Schools Division of Zamboanga del Norte. At the national level, the Department of Education (DepEd, 2024) has issued policy directions to rationalize teachers' workload and manage teaching overload, and DepEd (2025) further emphasized streamlining school forms and reports to reduce documentation burdens. However, these policy shifts do not automatically explain how much workload teachers actually carry at the district level, which workload components are most burdensome, and which specific strain are most affected in rural or geographically distinct settings. While Philippine literature reviews acknowledge that heavy workloads and extended working hours continue to shape teachers' well-being and can contribute to stress and burnout, they also highlight the need for stronger evidence that moves beyond broad or policy-level discussion toward localized empirical testing. Moreover, international evidence consistently links time pressure/work demands with emotional exhaustion, but findings from other contexts cannot be assumed to represent teachers' lived conditions in Salug II District; hence, there is a need for a district-based study that measures workload dimensions alongside validated indicators of occupational strain to generate actionable, locally relevant interventions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching Workload

Teachers' workload has increasingly been described as a combination of teaching duties and work intensification, where multiple responsibilities must be completed within limited time, often producing "time poverty" and a sense that work is never finished. Creagh et al. (2025) synthesized research showing that workload is shaped not only by the volume of tasks but also by the intensification of work (more tasks, faster pace, tighter timelines), which teachers frequently experience as unsustainable and intrusive to personal time. Jerrim and Sims (2021) provided evidence that the link between workload and well-being depends on *which tasks* consume teachers' time, with certain activities (e.g., marking) being especially detrimental suggesting that workload is not just "how much," but also "what kind" of work teachers do.

Empirical studies consistently associate workload-related pressure with negative well-being outcomes, particularly emotional exhaustion. Maas et al. (2021) found a strong positive relationship between teachers' perceived time pressure and emotional exhaustion, reinforcing time pressure as a key workload-related demand with health implications. Similarly, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2021) reported that time pressure emerged as the strongest predictor of emotional exhaustion, indicating that persistent workload demands can meaningfully contribute to the strain component of burnout over time.

Lesson Preparation Time and Planning

Lesson preparation time and planning are central teaching responsibilities that require sustained cognitive effort sequencing competencies, selecting strategies and materials, designing assessments, and anticipating learner needs yet many schools provide limited conditions that protect this time. Nordgren et al. (2021) reported (from a large survey of teachers) that supportive collegial structures and better infrastructure for planning and preparation are systematically associated with teachers' more positive validation of their teaching and working conditions, underscoring that planning quality depends partly on having organized time and collaborative support. Jellis et al. (2021) conceptualized "workload wellbeing" as teachers' perceived time available to complete key tasks such as marking, teaching, and administrative work, and qualitative responses emphasized the need for "more preparation and marking time," suggesting that insufficient planning time is experienced as a direct wellbeing concern.

Classroom Management

Classroom management is consistently identified as a core component of teaching quality because it shapes how effectively teachers establish order, monitor learning, and build a supportive classroom climate. Hettinger et al. (2021) found that teachers' classroom-management self-efficacy at the start of the school year significantly predicted later class-level monitoring and social relatedness, which in turn was associated with students' enjoyment showing that management capacity is linked to both instructional practice and learner experience. In intervention research, Aldabbagh et al. (2022) reported in a systematic review and meta-analysis that teacher-delivered programs produced large, significant improvements in teachers' use of classroom management strategies (e.g., responsive practices, praise), alongside improvements in teacher–child relationship indicators, suggesting that management skills are trainable and can improve observable practice.

Non-Teaching Activities

Non-teaching activities (e.g., paperwork, documentation, compliance reports, meetings, committee work, and other administrative duties) have become a major component of teachers' overall work time and are increasingly linked to work pressure. The OECD (2020) reports that the likelihood of teachers experiencing high stress rises notably as time spent on administrative tasks increases, indicating that non-instructional

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duties are not "neutral" tasks but are associated with heavier perceived strain. In addition, Creagh et al. (2025) synthesize research showing that growing compliance and administrative expectations contribute to teachers' "time poverty," where non-teaching demands spill into after-hours time and intensify the pace of work, reducing space for recovery and core instructional focus.

Support and Manage Activities

Support and manage activities (e.g., communicating with parents, coordinating learner support, mentoring, and handling stakeholder concerns) often require teachers to perform sustained "relational work" that carries emotional and time demands beyond classroom instruction. Zhai and Guo (2025) explain that parent–teacher interactions increasingly require emotional labor (managing feelings and displays to meet professional expectations), and these interactions can influence teachers' professional and personal well-being as the complexity of home–school cooperation grows. Likewise, using large-scale TALIS 2018 data, Yang, Jeon, and Choi (2025) found that time spent communicating with parents is associated with higher teacher self-efficacy but also greater parent-related stress, highlighting how support/coordination responsibilities can simultaneously build capacity and intensify strain if not well-supported.

Utilization of Differentiated Instruction Activities

Utilization of differentiated instruction activities refers to teachers' deliberate adaptation of content, process, products, and learning supports to address learners' varying readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles. Smale-Jacobse et al. (2019) reported that while differentiated instruction is widely promoted in practice, the empirical evidence base is uneven and often constrained by variability in implementation—suggesting that "using DI" depends heavily on teachers' capacity, time, and classroom conditions. Consistent with this, qualitative evidence shows that teachers and school leaders commonly describe major barriers to sustained differentiation such as limited planning time, competing workload demands, and constraints at the school level, which can restrict how consistently differentiated activities are used across classes (Gibbs, 2023).

Occupational Strain

Occupational strain among teachers is commonly reflected in **emotional strain** (e.g., stress, anxiety, emotional exhaustion) that develops when persistent work demands exceed available coping resources and recovery time. Maas et al. (2021) found a strong positive association between teachers' perceived time pressure and emotional exhaustion, indicating that time-compressed work experiences are closely tied to strain outcomes. Likewise, Agyapong et al. (2022) documented that teacher stress and burnout are widespread and linked with broader mental well-being concerns (including anxiety and depression), reinforcing occupational strain as a significant public health and workforce issue in education systems.

Occupational strain also includes physical strain, where chronic stress and burnout-related processes manifest as bodily complaints and health problems. Madigan and Kim (2023) reported that teacher burnout is consistently associated with somatic complaints (e.g., headaches), illnesses, voice disorders, and physiological biomarkers showing that strain is not purely psychological but can be embodied in measurable health outcomes. Similarly, Tahernejad et al. (2024) found that the overall prevalence of musculoskeletal disorders among teachers is high, with neck and lower back pain frequently reported, underscoring how sustained teaching demands can contribute to physical wear-and-tear.

Physical Strain

Physical strain among teachers is frequently documented as musculoskeletal pain and discomfort resulting from prolonged standing, repetitive tasks, and sustained static or awkward postures during teaching-related work. Tahernejad et al. (2024) reported a high overall prevalence of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) among teachers (68%), with neck and lower back among the most commonly affected regions, underscoring MSDs as a major physical-strain outcome in the profession. In addition, Baghban et al. (2025) found a pooled point prevalence of voice disorders of 37.7% and a lifetime prevalence of 63.1% among schoolteachers, indicating that vocal strain is another widespread physical burden linked to daily instructional demands.

Emotional Strain

Emotional strain in teaching is often discussed in terms of sustained emotional demands (e.g., regulating feelings, maintaining professional composure, and responding to learners' needs) that can accumulate into emotional exhaustion and broader burnout symptoms. Kariou et al. (2021) explain that teachers frequently perform emotional labor (e.g., surface acting and deep acting), and this repeated emotion regulation is consistently linked with higher burnout risk especially emotional exhaustion. Relatedly, Donker et al. (2020) found that teachers' emotion-regulation patterns (e.g., cognitive reappraisal vs. suppression) are meaningfully associated with emotional exhaustion, showing that how teachers manage emotions in daily work is directly connected to emotional-strain outcomes.

Emotional strain is also intensified when work demands and classroom challenges compress time and increase pressure, producing chronic stress reactions. Maas et al. (2021) reported a strong positive relationship between teachers' perceived time pressure and emotional exhaustion, indicating that "rushed" working conditions can be a key pathway to emotional strain. Aldrup et al. (2018) showed that student misbehavior is significantly associated with teachers' well-being outcomes, including higher emotional exhaustion and lower work enthusiasm, highlighting classroom disruption as an emotional-demand factor that can heighten strain when persistent.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 1. Part I highlights the independent variable, workload which is measured through five indicators, namely: lesson preparation time and planning; classroom management; non-teaching activities; support and manage activities;utilization of differentiated instruction activities. This section consists of twenty eight (28) items designed to assess the level of workload. Part II presents the dependent variable, occupational strain which is measured through two indicators, namely: physical strain; and emotional strain.

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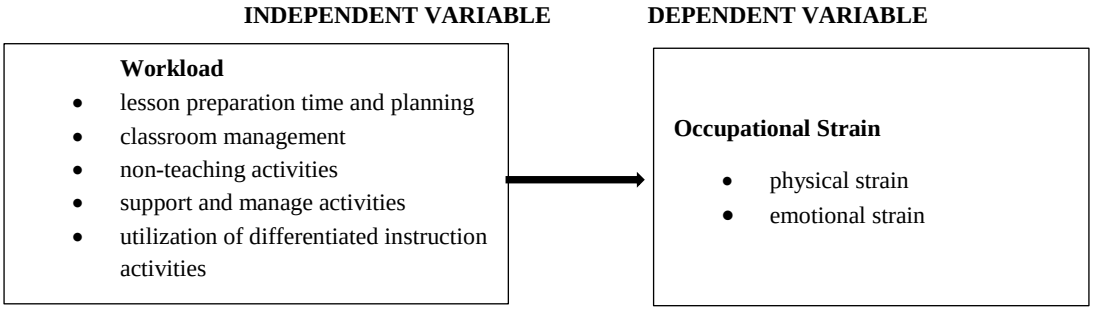


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the impact of workload on teachers' occupational strain in Salug II District, Schools Division of Zamboanga Del Norte, during the school year 2025-2026.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the respondents' perceived level of workload in terms of:
   1.1 lesson preparation time and planning
   1.2 classroom management;
   1.3 non-teaching activities;
   1.4 support and manage activities;
   1.5 utilization of differentiated instruction activities?
2. What is the respondents' perceived level of occupational strain in terms of:
   2.1 physical strain; and
   2.2 emotional strain?
3. Is there a significant relationship between respondents' perceived level of workload and respondents' perceived level of occupational strain?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between the respondents' perceived level of workload and respondents' perceived level of occupational strain.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study focuses on determining the level of workload and occupational strain, and examining the relationship between these two variables among 105 teacher-respondents in Salug II District, Schools Division of Zamboanga del Norte during School Year 2025–2026. This study is limited to two major variables: workload which is measured through five indicators, namely: lesson preparation time and planning; classroom management; non-teaching activities; support and manage activities; utilization of differentiated instruction activities. Occupational strain which is measured through two indicators, namely: physical strain; and emotional strain.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Method Used

The study utilized survey and descriptive-correlational research methods. The researcher utilized the survey method to collect data on the workload and occupational strain through a questionnaire. Farrow et al. (2020) explain that surveys "involve asking a series of questions to participants" and can be administered in different modes, with the resulting data analyzed quantitatively and/or qualitatively. Likewise, Symbaluk (2024) states that the purpose of surveys is essentially "to find things out by asking questions," emphasizing their use for describing individuals/groups and examining relationships among variables. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) define correlational research as the systematic investigation of relationships among two or more variables, conducted without any experimental manipulation of those variables. Correlational research is a non-experimental approach in which a researcher quantifies variables and assesses the statistical relationship between the workload and occupational strain, without the influence of extraneous variables.

The researcher secured formal permission from the School heads to administer and distribute the questionnaires for data collection during Calendar Year 2025. The study focused on DepEd teachers. In accordance with basic research ethics, the researcher ensured informed participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and proper handling of the respondents' answers. Since the study did not involve highly sensitive topics and posed minimal risk to the participants, a full ethical review was considered unnecessary.

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The following ranges of values with their descriptive interpretation will be used:

Scale	Range of Values	Description	Interpretation
5	4.50-5.00	Always	Very High
4	3.50- 4.49	Often	High
3	2.50-3.49	Sometimes	Moderate
2	1.50-2.49	Rarely	Low
1	1.00- 1.49	Never	Very Low

Data presentation and analysis

The data are presented in accordance with the statement of the problems of the current study. The study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the respondents' perceived level of workload in terms of:
   1.1 lesson preparation time and planning
   1.2 classroom management;
   1.3 non-teaching activities;
   1.4 support and manage activities;
   1.5 utilization of differentiated instruction activities?

Table 1: Teachers' perceived level of workload in terms of lesson preparation time and planning

Descriptors	AWV	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. I clearly define the learning objectives before designing the lesson.	4.75	0.434	Always	Very High
2. My learning objectives are aligned with curriculum standards.	4.90	0.365	Always	Very High
3. I select content that is relevant to students' needs and interests.	4.78	0.438	Always	Very High
4. I consider the prior knowledge of students when setting objectives.	4.66	0.516	Always	Very High
5. I use a variety of instructional materials (textbooks, visuals, multimedia, etc.).	4.72	0.490	Always	Very High
6. Resources needed for the lesson are readily available.	4.45	0.604	Always	Very High
7. After teaching, I reflect on what worked well and what did not.	4.52	0.573	Always	Very High
Overall	**4.68**	**0.350**	**Always**	**Very High**

AWV-Average Weighted Value, SD-Standard Deviation

Table 1 indicates that teachers' perceived workload in terms of lesson preparation time and planning is very high, with an overall Mean AWV of 4.68 (SD = 0.350) described as Always and interpreted as Excellent. All seven indicators were rated Always (Excellent), showing consistently strong planning practices. The highest-rated item is "My learning objectives are aligned with curriculum standards" (AWV = 4.90, SD = 0.365), followed by "I select content that is relevant to students' needs and interests" (AWV = 4.78, SD = 0.438) and "I clearly define the learning objectives before designing the lesson" (AWV = 4.75, SD = 0.434). The lowest-rated item, though still Excellent, is "Resources needed for the lesson are readily available" (AWV = 4.45, SD = 0.604), suggesting comparatively greater variability in access to resources across teachers. This means that teachers in the district consistently practice strong lesson planning behaviors particularly in aligning objectives with curriculum standards and selecting relevant content while resource availability, although still rated excellent, appears to be the most comparatively constrained aspect of lesson preparation. This implies that sustaining high-quality lesson planning should remain a priority through continued instructional support and collaborative planning structures, while school leaders should strengthen resource provision (e.g., access to teaching materials, learning resources, and multimedia tools) to reduce preparation burdens and ensure equitable access to materials needed for effective lessons.

The present result is supported by Nordgren et al. (2021), who emphasized that effective lesson planning is strengthened by appropriate school conditions and infrastructure, and that collaboration and planning supports are linked with improved teaching work processes. The present result is also supported by Jerrim and Sims (2021), who reported that teacher workload and well-being are influenced by specific task demands such as planning and preparation, implying that strong planning practices can be maintained when schools provide sufficient time and support for these core instructional tasks.

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Table 2: Teachers' perceived level of workload in terms of classroom management

Descriptors	AWV	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. I have clear classroom rules that are understood by all students.	4.81	0.395	Always	Very High
2. I reinforce school/district policies in my classroom rules.	4.70	0.479	Always	Very High
3. I monitor student behavior closely during class activities.	4.84	0.370	Always	Very High
4. I promptly address misbehavior when it occurs.	4.76	0.471	Always	Very High
5. I involve students in creating behavior expectations.	4.66	0.534	Always	Very High
6. I use fair and consistent consequences for inappropriate behavior.	4.77	0.465	Always	Very High
Overall	**4.76**	**0.337**	**Always**	**Very High**

AWV-Average Weighted Value, SD-Standard Deviation

Table 2 shows that teachers' perceived level of workload in terms of classroom management is consistently very high, with an overall Mean AWV of 4.76 (SD = 0.337) described as Always and interpreted as Very High. All six indicators were rated Always (Very High), suggesting strong classroom management practices across respondents. The highest-rated item is "I monitor student behavior closely during class activities" (AWV = 4.84, SD = 0.370), followed by "I have clear classroom rules that are understood by all students" (AWV = 4.81, SD = 0.395) and "I use fair and consistent consequences for inappropriate behavior" (AWV = 4.77, SD = 0.465). The lowest-rated item, though still very high, is "I involve students in creating behavior expectations" (AWV = 4.66, SD = 0.534), indicating slightly greater variation in participatory rule-setting practices. This means that teachers regularly apply structured and responsive classroom management strategies particularly close monitoring of behavior and ensuring clear, understood rules while student involvement in creating behavior expectations, although still practiced often, is comparatively less emphasized. This implies that schools should sustain these strong classroom management routines through continuous professional development and peer sharing of effective strategies, while also strengthening participatory approaches (e.g., co-creating norms and expectations with learners) to support self-regulation, improve classroom climate, and reduce repeated misbehavior that can add to teacher workload and strain.

The study result is supported by Aldrup et al. (2018), who showed that classroom behavior challenges (e.g., student misbehavior) are closely linked to teacher well-being outcomes such as emotional exhaustion, underscoring the importance of consistent management practices in reducing classroom-related strain. The obtained finding is also supported by Hettinger et al. (2021), who found that teachers' classroom management self-efficacy is longitudinally related to positive teaching behaviors (e.g., monitoring and supportive classroom interactions) and student outcomes, indicating that strong classroom management contributes to effective instruction and classroom functioning.

Table 3: Teachers' perceived level of workload in terms of non-teaching activities in school

Descriptors	AWV	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. I fill out administrative paperwork (reports, forms , compliance).	4.69	0.506	Always	Very High
2. I coordinate or organize extracurricular activities.	4.54	0.621	Always	Very High
3. I entered the data of learner information in the system and record keeping.	4.78	0.438	Always	Very High
4. I provide mentoring or peer coaching /supervision of other teachers.	4.37	0.800	Always	Very High
5. I believe the time I spend on non-teaching activities is reasonable.	4.53	0.666	Always	Very High
Overall	**4.58**	**0.483**	**Always**	**Very High**

AWV-Average Weighted Value, SD-Standard Deviation

Table 3 shows that teachers' perceived level of workload in terms of non-teaching activities in school is very high, with an overall Mean AWV of 4.58 (SD = 0.483) described as Always and interpreted as Very High. All five indicators were rated Always (Very High), indicating that non-instructional tasks are regularly performed by the respondents. The highest-rated item is "I entered the data of learner information in the system and record keeping" (AWV = 4.78, SD = 0.438), followed by "I fill out administrative paperwork (reports, forms, compliance)" (AWV = 4.69, SD = 0.506). The lowest-rated item, though still very high, is "I provide mentoring or peer coaching/supervision of other teachers" (AWV =

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4.37, SD = 0.800), and it also shows the largest variability, suggesting differences in who is assigned mentoring duties. This means that teachers consistently carry substantial administrative and school-support responsibilities, particularly in learner data management and compliance paperwork, while mentoring/coaching duties are more unevenly distributed across teachers. This implies that school leaders should review and streamline non-teaching task requirements (especially documentation and data-entry processes) and consider workload redistribution or dedicated support mechanisms (e.g., clerical/data support, clearer mentoring role assignments) to prevent non-teaching demands from crowding out instructional time and increasing occupational strain.

The finding revealed in this study is supported by the OECD (2020), which reported that greater time spent on administrative work is associated with higher likelihood of teachers experiencing work-related stress, emphasizing the burden of non-teaching demands. The finding revealed in this study is also supported by Shen et al. (2025), who found that extra-administrative workload significantly predicts teachers' emotional exhaustion, demonstrating that increased non-teaching responsibilities can contribute directly to strain outcomes.

Table 4: Teachers' perceived level of workload in terms of support and manage activities

Descriptors	AWV	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. I take part in decision-making processes related to school policies or procedures. (reports, forms, compliance).	4.59	0.615	Always	Very High
2. I participate in meetings where school priorities and goals are discussed.	4.80	0.447	Always	Very High
3. I receive support from school leadership (principal, head teacher) when I face challenges in my role.	4.80	0.425	Always	Very High
4. I collaborate with colleagues in planning and managing school resources (supplies, classrooms, equipment).	4.73	0.465	Always	Very High
5. I help with the supervision or training of newer teachers or staff.	4.50	0.798	Always	Very High
Overall	**4.69**	**0.419**	**Always**	**Very High**

AWV-Average Weighted Value, SD-Standard Deviation

Table 4 shows that teachers' perceived level of workload in terms of support and management activities is very high, with an overall Mean AWV of 4.69 (SD = 0.419) described as Always and interpreted as Very High. All five indicators were rated Always (Very High), indicating regular involvement in school-level support and management functions. The highest-rated indicators are "I participate in meetings where school priorities and goals are discussed" and "I receive support from school leadership when I face challenges," both with AWV = 4.80 (SD = 0.447 and 0.425, respectively). This is followed by collaboration in planning and managing resources (AWV = 4.73, SD = 0.465) and participation in decision-making (AWV = 4.59, SD = 0.615). The lowest-rated item, though still very high and with the largest variability, is "I help with the supervision or training of newer teachers or staff" (AWV = 4.50, SD = 0.798), suggesting that mentoring/training roles may be assigned more selectively. This means that teachers are consistently engaged in school governance and management processes particularly attending meetings about priorities and receiving leadership support while supervision and training of newer staff, although common, appears to vary more across respondents. This implies that school administrators should sustain strong leadership support and collaborative management structures, while also clarifying mentoring/training roles and providing time allowances or recognition for teachers tasked with coaching newer staff to prevent these additional responsibilities from intensifying workload and contributing to occupational strain.

The result shown in the table is supported by Maas et al. (2021), who found that support from school principals is associated with lower time pressure and lower emotional exhaustion, highlighting leadership support as a key resource that buffers workload-related strain. The result shown in the table is also supported by Avanzi et al. (2018), who reported that social and collegial support can reduce perceived workload pressures and burnout, indicating that collaborative and supportive school environments help teachers manage broad responsibilities beyond classroom instruction.

Table 5: Teachers' perceived level of workload in terms of utilization of differentiated instruction

Descriptors	AWV	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. I regularly assess students' readiness before planning differentiated instruction.	4.71	0.475	Always	Very High
2. I reflect on which differentiated strategies worked well and which did not, after each lesson.	4.51	0.606	Always	Very High

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3. I sometimes find it difficult to prepare differentiated materials/ resources.	4.12	0.829	Often	High
4. I provide different materials or reading texts depending on students' abilities.	4.48	0.652	Always	Very High
5. I use students' interests when choosing topics or examples for lessons.	4.47	0.589	Always	Very High
Overall	**4.46**	**0.451**	**Always**	**Very High**

AWV-Average Weighted Value, SD-Standard Deviation

Table 5 shows that teachers' perceived level of workload in terms of utilization of differentiated instruction is generally very high, with an overall Mean AWV of 4.46 (SD = 0.451) described as Always and interpreted as Very High. Four of the five indicators were rated Always (Very High), indicating that differentiated practices are commonly applied. The highest-rated item is "I regularly assess students' readiness before planning differentiated instruction" (AWV = 4.71, SD = 0.475). This is followed by reflecting on the effectiveness of differentiated strategies (AWV = 4.51, SD = 0.606), providing different materials based on ability (AWV = 4.48, SD = 0.652), and using students' interests in selecting topics/examples (AWV = 4.47, SD = 0.589). Notably, item 3—"I sometimes find it difficult to prepare differentiated materials/resources"—has the lowest mean (AWV = 4.12, SD = 0.829) and is described as Often with High interpretation, suggesting that preparing differentiated materials remains a comparatively challenging and variable workload area. This means that teachers frequently implement differentiated instruction practices, particularly assessing readiness and adapting materials; however, many teachers still experience consistent difficulty in preparing differentiated resources, making it a key workload challenge within differentiation. This implies that while differentiated instruction is strongly practiced, schools should provide structured support to reduce the preparation burden such as shared resource banks, collaborative planning time, template-based materials, and targeted professional development so that the difficulty of preparing differentiated resources does not intensify workload and eventually contribute to occupational strain.

The finding generated from the data is supported by Smale-Jacobse et al. (2019), who noted that differentiated instruction is widely encouraged but that implementation can be constrained by practical challenges and variability in classroom conditions, implying that consistent differentiation often requires strong support structures. The finding generated from the data is also supported by Gibbs (2023), who reported that teachers commonly cite barriers to differentiated instruction such as limited time and the added workload of preparing varied materials, aligning with the item showing difficulty in preparing differentiated resources.

Table 6: Summary of the teachers' perceived level of workload

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
A. Lesson Preparation Time and Planning	4.68	0.350	Always	Very High
B. Classroom Management	4.76	0.337	Always	Very High
C. Non-teaching Activities in School	4.58	0.483	Always	Very High
D.Support and Management Activities	4.69	0.419	Always	Very High
E.Utilization of Differentiated Instruction	4.46	0.451	Always	Very High
Overall	**4.64**	**0.333**	**Always**	**Very High**

SD-Standard Deviation

Table 6 summarizes that teachers' perceived level of workload is consistently very high across all indicators, with an overall mean of 4.64 (SD = 0.333) described as Always and interpreted as Very High. Among the five indicators, Classroom Management obtained the highest mean (M = 4.76, SD = 0.337), followed by Support and Management Activities (M = 4.69, SD = 0.419) and Lesson Preparation Time and Planning (M = 4.68, SD = 0.350). Non-teaching Activities in School also remained very high (M = 4.58, SD = 0.483). The lowest, though still very high, is Utilization of Differentiated Instruction (M = 4.46, SD = 0.451), indicating it is the most challenging area relative to the others. This means that teachers in the district experience a very high workload in both instructional and non-instructional responsibilities, with the strongest demands reflected in classroom management and school management roles, while differentiated instruction though still frequently practiced appears to require the most additional effort compared with other workload dimensions. This implies that schools and district leaders should prioritize workload rationalization and support systems by streamlining non-teaching requirements, strengthening instructional supports (e.g., classroom management coaching and resource provision), and providing structured assistance for differentiated instruction (e.g., shared materials, collaborative planning time) to prevent sustained high workload from escalating occupational strain and reducing teacher well-being.

The evidence from the present study is supported by Creagh et al. (2025), who concluded that teachers commonly experience workload intensification and "time poverty," where multiple responsibilities accumulate and reduce time for recovery, which aligns with the consistently very high workload across indicators. The evidence from the present study is also supported by the OECD (2020), which reported that heavier

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workloads and increased time spent on administrative tasks are associated with higher work-related stress among teachers, reinforcing the importance of managing both instructional and non-instructional demands.

Teachers' Occupational Strain

Table 7: Teachers' perceived level of occupational strain in terms of physical strain

Descriptors	AWV	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. I experience soreness or pain in my lower back after a day of teaching.	3.85	1.191	Often	High
2. I feel strain in my neck or shoulders when writing on the board or using overhead projection.	3.66	1.223	Often	High
3. I often stand for long periods without sufficient breaks.	3.51	0.972	Often	High
4. I sometimes feel fatigue in my legs or feet by the end of the teaching day.	3.72	1.139	Often	High
5. I am required to bend, twist, or reach frequently during class.	3.80	1.013	Often	High
6. I experience discomfort in my wrists, hands, or forearms from writing, typing, and marking.	3.80	1.087	Often	High
7. I feel general exhaustion in my body due to carrying heavy teaching materials or equipment.	3.65	1.225	Often	High
8. I feel stiff or have reduced mobility after long teaching hours.	3.61	1.189	Often	High
9. I often wake up with aches or pains related to my work the next morning.	3.53	1.201	Often	High
Overall	**3.68**	**0.948**	**Often**	**High**

AWV-Average Weighted Value, SD-Standard Deviation

Table 7 shows that teachers' perceived level of occupational strain in terms of physical strain is generally high, with an overall Mean AWV of 3.68 (SD = 0.948) described as Often and interpreted as High. All nine indicators were rated Often (High), indicating that physical strain symptoms are frequently experienced. The highest-rated item is lower back soreness or pain after a day of teaching (AWV = 3.85, SD = 1.191), followed closely by frequent bending, twisting, or reaching (AWV = 3.80, SD = 1.013) and discomfort in wrists/hands/forearms from writing, typing, and marking (AWV = 3.80, SD = 1.087). Other commonly experienced concerns include leg/foot fatigue (AWV = 3.72, SD = 1.139) and general exhaustion from carrying heavy materials (AWV = 3.65, SD = 1.225). The relatively larger SD values (around ~1.0 or higher) suggest noticeable differences among teachers in how strongly these physical symptoms are felt. This means that teachers frequently experience work-related physical discomfort and fatigue, particularly lower back pain, repetitive-movement strain, and end-of-day exhaustion indicating that the physical demands of teaching remain substantial in the study setting. This implies that schools should strengthen occupational health and ergonomic supports by promoting regular movement breaks, improving classroom ergonomics (e.g., board height, chair/table setup, storage), reducing the need to carry heavy materials, and providing wellness initiatives (e.g., stretching programs, ergonomic training, and access to basic health support) to lessen recurring physical strain and prevent longer-term musculoskeletal problems.

The current finding is supported by Tahernejad et al. (2024), who reported a high prevalence of musculoskeletal disorders among teachers, with neck and lower back among the most commonly affected body areas, consistent with the frequent back and neck/shoulder strain reported in this table. The current finding is also supported by Ramírez-García et al. (2023), who found substantial levels of musculoskeletal discomfort among primary school teachers and noted that common teaching tasks expose teachers to ergonomic risks, aligning with the frequent bending, standing, and repetitive writing/marking reflected in the indicators.

2. What is the respondents' perceived level of occupational strain in terms of:

2.1 physical strain; and

2.2 emotional strain?

Table 8: Teachers' perceived level of occupational strain in terms of emotional strain

Descriptors	AWV	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. I feel emotionally drained by the end of the school day.	3.47	1.066	Often	High
2. I often worry about work even when I'm not at school.	3.72	1.156	Often	High

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3. I find it hard to relax after work because I'm thinking about things I need to catch up on.	3.53	1.127	Often	High
4. I feel anxious when I anticipate difficult interactions with students, parents, or colleagues.	3.25	1.142	Sometimes	Moderate
5. I feel irritable or frustrated more often than I used to because of my work.	2.64	1.331	Sometimes	Moderate
6. I feel that my emotional energy is depleted from managing student behavior or learning needs.	3.05	1.220	Sometimes	Moderate
7. I find that emotional issues at school affect my mood outside of working hours.	2.87	1.309	Sometimes	Moderate
8. I sometimes feel overwhelmed by the expectations placed on me as a teacher and staff member.	3.27	1.258	Sometimes	Moderate
9. I worry whether I am doing enough to support all my students.	3.34	1.262	Sometimes	Moderate
Overall	**3.24**	**1.015**	**Sometimes**	**Moderate**

AWV-Average Weighted Value, SD-Standard Deviation

Table 8 shows that teachers' perceived level of occupational strain in terms of emotional strain is moderate overall, with a Mean AWV of 3.24 (SD = 1.015) described as Sometimes and interpreted as Moderate. Among the nine indicators, the highest-rated item is "I often worry about work even when I'm not at school" (AWV = 3.72, SD = 1.156) interpreted as Often (High), followed by "I find it hard to relax after work because I'm thinking about things I need to catch up on" (AWV = 3.53, SD = 1.127) and "I feel emotionally drained by the end of the school day" (AWV = 3.47, SD = 1.066), both also reflecting relatively elevated emotional strain. In contrast, several items fell in the Sometimes (Moderate) range, including anxiety about difficult interactions (AWV = 3.25), feeling overwhelmed by expectations (AWV = 3.27), and worry about supporting all students (AWV = 3.34). The lowest-rated indicator is "I feel irritable or frustrated more often than I used to because of my work" (AWV = 2.64, SD = 1.331), suggesting irritation/frustration is less frequently experienced compared with worry and difficulty relaxing. This means that teachers experience emotional strain at a moderate level, characterized most strongly by work-related worry and difficulty disengaging after work, while other emotional symptoms such as irritability and anxiety about interactions occur less frequently for many respondents. This implies that schools should prioritize strategies that help teachers psychologically detach and recover after work, such as realistic workload scheduling, clear boundaries on after-hours tasks, supportive leadership check-ins, peer support, and stress-management or well-being programs so that persistent work-related rumination and emotional depletion do not escalate into higher exhaustion or burnout over time.

The evidence from the present study is supported by Maas et al. (2021), who found that time pressure is strongly associated with emotional exhaustion, suggesting that when work demands compress time, teachers are more likely to feel emotionally drained and unable to disengage. The evidence from the present study is also supported by Donker et al. (2020), who reported that teachers' emotional exhaustion is meaningfully associated with their emotion-regulation patterns, indicating that sustained emotional demands and difficulty regulating or "switching off" from work can contribute to emotional strain.

Table 9: Summary of the teachers' perceived level of occupational strain

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
Physical Strain	3.68	0.948	Often	High
Emotional Strain	3.24	1.015	Sometimes	Moderate
Overall	**3.46**	**0.866**	**Often**	**High**

SD-Standard Deviation

Table 9 shows that teachers' perceived level of occupational strain is high overall, with an Overall Mean of 3.46 (SD = 0.866) described as Often and interpreted as High. Among the two indicators, Physical Strain obtained the higher mean (M = 3.68, SD = 0.948) interpreted as Often (High), while Emotional Strain registered a moderate level (M = 3.24, SD = 1.015) described as Sometimes (Moderate). This indicates that teachers experience occupational strain more strongly through physical symptoms than emotional symptoms. This means that teachers generally experience occupational strain frequently, with physical strain (e.g., fatigue, aches, musculoskeletal discomfort) being more pronounced than emotional strain, although emotional strain is still present at a moderate level. This implies that school-based interventions should prioritize occupational health and ergonomic support (e.g., reducing prolonged standing, improving classroom ergonomics, minimizing heavy carrying, wellness exercises) while also strengthening psychosocial supports (e.g., stress management, supportive leadership, peer support, work-life boundary practices) to prevent moderate emotional strain from increasing and to sustain teacher well-being.

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The result of the analysis is supported by Tahernejad et al. (2024), who reported a high prevalence of musculoskeletal disorders among teachers, particularly affecting the lower back and neck, aligning with the higher physical strain in this study. The result of the analysis is also supported by Maas et al. (2021), who found that work demands such as time pressure are strongly associated with emotional exhaustion, supporting the presence of emotional strain even when it is comparatively lower than physical strain.

3. Is there a significant relationship between respondents' perceived level of workload and respondents' perceived level of occupational strain?

Table 10: Test of relationship between Teachers workload and occupational strain

Variables Correlated	rho-value	p-value	Interpretation
Teachers' Workload and Occupational Strain	0.046	0.641	negligible Slight/positive correlation Not Significant

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 10 presents the test of relationship between teachers' workload and occupational strain. The result shows a rho-value of 0.046 and a p-value of 0.641, which indicates a negligible positive correlation and a not significant relationship. Since the p-value is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the relationship between teachers' workload and occupational strain is statistically not significant. This means that even though the relationship is positive, the degree of association is very weak, and teachers' workload does not significantly correspond with their occupational strain among the respondents of the study. This means that the level of workload experienced by teachers does not automatically lead to a higher level of occupational strain in the overall result. Although teachers may experience workload from lesson preparation, classroom management, non-teaching activities, support and management tasks, and differentiated instruction, the data suggest that these workload demands, when taken as a whole, are not strong enough to significantly influence their overall physical and emotional strain. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that "there is no significant relationship between teachers' workload and occupational strain" is accepted. This implies that other factors aside from workload may have greater influence on teachers' occupational strain, such as age, health condition, coping ability, school climate, administrative support, family responsibilities, and personal well-being practices. Hence, school heads and DepEd officials should not only focus on reducing workload but should also strengthen wellness programs, stress management activities, collegial support, fair task distribution, and health-related interventions to protect teachers from physical and emotional strain.

The current finding is supported by OECD (2020), which emphasized that administrative and non-instructional duties can increase teachers' work pressure and stress, but the effect of workload on strain may vary depending on the local school context and available support systems. The finding is also partly supported by Tahernejad et al. (2024), who reported that teachers may experience physical strain through musculoskeletal problems; however, such strain may be affected by specific task demands and physical conditions rather than overall workload alone. Thus, the result suggests that while workload remains an important concern, it may not always produce a statistically significant relationship with overall occupational strain in every group of teachers.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study revealed that teachers in Salug II District experienced a very high level of workload, with an overall mean of 4.64, indicating that they consistently performed demanding instructional and non-instructional responsibilities such as lesson preparation, classroom management, non-teaching activities, support and management tasks, and differentiated instruction. Among these indicators, classroom management obtained the highest mean of 4.76, showing that maintaining order, monitoring learner behavior, and applying consistent rules were among the most frequently performed workload-related tasks, while differentiated instruction obtained the lowest mean of 4.46, though still interpreted as very high, suggesting that preparing varied learning materials and adapting instruction to students' needs remained a challenging but regularly practiced responsibility. In terms of occupational strain, teachers reported a high overall level of strain with a mean of 3.46, where physical strain was higher (3.68) than emotional strain (3.24), indicating that teachers were more affected by bodily fatigue, lower back pain, neck and shoulder strain, leg and foot fatigue, and discomfort from repetitive teaching tasks than by emotional exhaustion. However, the test of relationship showed a rho-value of 0.046 and a p-value of 0.641, which means that the relationship between workload and occupational strain was negligible and not statistically significant; therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted. This implies that although teachers carried a very high workload and experienced high occupational strain, workload alone did not significantly determine their level of strain. Other factors such as health condition, age, coping ability, school climate, leadership support, family responsibilities, task distribution, and personal wellness practices may have influenced teachers' physical and emotional strain. Hence, the study suggests that school heads and DepEd officials should not only rationalize workload and reduce unnecessary non-teaching tasks, but also strengthen wellness programs, ergonomic support, stress management activities, collegial assistance, and fair distribution of responsibilities to protect teachers' overall well-being.

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