

Original Article

Work-Life Balance and Subjective Well-Being Among Public School Teachers in the Philippines

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Abstract. Despite extensive discussions of teacher workload, there remains limited qualitative evidence on how work-life balance shapes subjective well-being among public school teachers within the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd). This study aimed to examine the relationship between subjective well-being and work-life balance among teachers in three congressional districts of the Schools Division of Bohol. A qualitative single-case study design was employed involving twelve (12) purposively selected elementary and secondary teachers across varied age groups and designations. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's framework. Five major themes emerged: (1) structural demands, (2) emotional and physical strain, (3) adaptive coping strategies, (4) institutional and social support systems, and (5) impact on subjective well-being. Findings indicate that excessive workload disrupts personal life and contributes to stress and fatigue; however, teachers maintain a sense of subjective well-being derived from professional fulfillment and student-related achievements. Support from school leadership and colleagues mitigates stress when perceived as equitable and consistent. Overall, work-life balance is experienced as a dynamic and context-dependent process shaped by systemic demands and individual coping mechanisms. The study recommends targeted interventions, including time-management training, strengthened institutional support, and policy measures that recognize additional teacher roles to enhance well-being and balance.

Keywords: Department of Education (DepEd) Bohol; Educational management; Qualitative case study; Subjective well-being; Teachers' work-life balance

Teaching is a profession historically defined by its permeable boundaries, traditionally characterized by labor that extends far beyond the scheduled hours of classroom instruction. In the contemporary educational landscape, this vocation has become a high-pressure environment in which lesson planning, administrative reporting, and extracurricular supervision are increasingly intensified by the pervasive "always-on" culture of digital connectivity. This shift has resulted in a systemic erosion of the division between professional duties and personal life, a phenomenon that poses significant risks to educator longevity and institutional efficacy.

At the core of this discourse are the constructs of subjective well-being and work-life balance. Subjective well-being involves an individual's cognitive and affective evaluation of their life, encompassing emotional stability and a sense of fulfillment. At the same time, work-life balance refers to the harmonious management of

professional obligations alongside personal and family responsibilities. When these domains conflict, the resulting boundary drift often leads to chronic fatigue, diminished job satisfaction, and a measurable decline in instructional quality.

The theoretical intersection of subjective well-being and work-life balance suggests that individual psychological resources and institutional frameworks must align to foster professional resilience. Zhou et al. (2024) demonstrate that autonomous motivation and psychological capital serve as critical protectors of well-being, whereas burnout remains the primary correlate of its decline. Furthermore, the sustainability of the teaching profession is heavily contingent on school leadership's ability to implement practical strategies to meet modern educational demands (Markowitz, 2025). As educators navigate these pressures, achieving a healthy equilibrium is no longer merely a personal preference but a professional imperative necessary for maintaining teacher productivity and student engagement.

Current scholarship highlights that the intensification of administrative labor is a primary catalyst for educator burnout globally. For instance, evidence from Nigeria indicates that heavy workloads and administrative duties lead to increased absenteeism and decreased motivation (Badmus, 2025). Similarly, university professors in India report that teaching multiple subjects creates overwhelming demands that compromise their ability to maintain a balance between their professional and personal lives (Abhitha & Hebbar, 2022). Mirroring these international trends, teachers in the Philippines face parallel struggles with time management and meeting productivity expectations. Local studies across school divisions, such as those in Laguna and Caloocan City, reveal that tight reporting deadlines and special assignments consistently disrupt the work-home equilibrium (Aquino et al., 2023; Eden, 2025).

Beyond the physical workload, the emotional weight of modern teaching further exacerbates boundary erosion. Female educators across different cultural contexts, such as middle school teachers in the United States and higher education faculty in Brazil, often experience higher workplace stress and struggle to set boundaries compared to their male counterparts (Crews et al., 2024; Franco et al., 2021). In a similar vein, within the local setting, the unique exhaustion associated with specialized emotional labor, such as caring for learners with special needs, has been shown to significantly disrupt the balance for teachers in the City Division of Tagum, ultimately leading to demotivation and burnout (Barbarona-Gudelosao & Escote, 2025).

Furthermore, the patterns of struggle are often mediated by systemic and socio-economic variables that transcend national borders. In South Asia, low salary scales exacerbate the difficulty of managing increased family responsibilities alongside professional drift (Abhitha & Hebbar, 2022). This socio-economic tension is particularly evident in the Philippines, where the "sandwich generation" struggles to care for both children and elderly parents, creating intense role conflict for teachers. As domestic chores and family needs compete directly with employment responsibilities, financial pressures, and limited time create additional hurdles for maintaining a sustainable balance (Javier & Rosal, 2021; Tipan & Aguilar, 2025).

Despite these pervasive stressors, a subset of the literature presents a paradox where some cohorts report high levels of work-life balance alongside strong teaching performance. Internationally, psychological resources such as hope and autonomous motivation have been identified as strong protectors of well-being (Zhou et al., 2024). Locally, studies in Davao de Oro and Bukidnon suggest that high intrinsic motivation and robust commitment can lead to satisfactory teaching competence even under pressure (Gilla et al., 2025; Yburan & Tantiado, 2025). However, this suggests that high performance does not necessarily indicate the absence of stress, but rather the presence of coping mechanisms that require deeper qualitative investigation.

Despite extensive evidence regarding teacher workload and its impact on well-being, a significant knowledge deficit persists. While existing literature effectively identifies external stressors such as workload, time management, and role conflict, there is a scarcity of research focused on how these challenges are uniquely shaped by localized institutional policies and cultural expectations within the Department of Education (DepEd). Furthermore, most current literature remains quantitative and cross-sectional, offering limited insight into the day-to-day negotiation of professional and personal boundaries. Specifically, there is a lack of qualitative, context-specific research examining how localized school environments in DepEd Bohol shape teachers' lived experiences of work-life balance and subjective well-being.

This study seeks to bridge these gaps by examining the work-life balance and subjective well-being of DepEd teachers. The purpose of this research is to investigate the specific demands influencing educator well-being, the impact of boundary erosion on professional and personal domains, and the efficacy of current coping strategies and institutional supports.

To achieve this, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. What work-related and personal-life demands contribute to public-school teachers' subjective well-being in maintaining work-life balance?
2. How do these competing demands affect teachers' subjective well-being, family relationships, and professional responsibilities?
3. What coping mechanisms and strategies do public school teachers employ to manage work-life imbalance?
4. What forms of institutional and social support are available, and how effective are these in promoting work-life balance?
5. What are the perceived outcomes of a lack of work-life balance on teachers' work performance, motivation, and overall subjective well-being?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative single-case study design, chosen because the Schools Division of Bohol represents a large-scale Philippine educational administrative unit. According to Yin (2018), this approach is appropriate for achieving a granular, contextualized understanding of how localized institutional cultures influence a specific phenomenon. In accordance with case study logic, the case is strictly bounded by system, place, and time. The institutional framework and administrative mandates of the DepEd Schools Division of Bohol. The geographical and professional limits of the three congressional districts within the province. And the study was conducted on the revised K-12 curriculum transition period. Furthermore, the study adopts an embedded case study design. While the division serves as the primary unit of analysis, the various elementary and secondary levels representing diverse career stages and school contexts function as embedded subunits. This ensures the research is not merely holistic but accounts for how individual struggles and coping mechanisms manifest differently within a singular, bounded authority.

Study Participants and Data Gathering

The participants in the study were 12 public school teachers from elementary and secondary schools, selected through purposive sampling. To be included, (a) they must have at least three years of teaching experience, (b) be currently handling regular teaching loads along with additional duties such as ancillary tasks or coordinatorship, and (c) be willing to share their experiences regarding workload and work-life balance. To ensure a comprehensive exploration of the study, a maximum variation sampling strategy was employed, selecting educators across different career stages (early, mid, and late career) and family statuses. This diversity enabled the capture of varied perspectives on work-life balance, from the clashes between work and family duties experienced by younger parents to the additional roles managed by senior coordinators. To move beyond a homogeneous description, a maximum-variation sampling strategy was operationalized to capture a broad spectrum of the phenomenon. This variation was systematically ensured across three critical dimensions:

Career Stage and Rank: Selection spanned early-, mid-, and late-career educators (e.g., Teacher I to Master Teacher) to examine how professional growth and administrative seniority influence work-life priorities.

Workload Intensity and Role Type: Participants were chosen based on the diversity of their additional duties, ranging from classroom-heavy roles to senior coordinator positions, to assess how different institutional burdens shape subjective well-being.

Family Status and Social Context: Variation included teachers from different family life stages, from younger parents facing immediate domestic clashes to senior staff managing broader social or family responsibilities.

By mapping these dimensions across the three congressional districts of the Schools Division of Bohol, the sampling strategy ensured that the findings reflect the multifaceted and evolving nature of work-life balance

under a singular divisional authority.

The principle of data saturation determined the sample size. Purposive sampling works well because it allows researchers to select participants with the most knowledge and direct experience with the topic under study, since the goal of the research is to understand the challenges and coping strategies of teachers balancing work and personal life. Selecting those who met these criteria provided rich, relevant, and meaningful data for the study.

The data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The discussions provide personal stories, while the FGDs capture shared experiences.

Data Analysis

The study utilized Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), following the framework of Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019), to identify and interpret patterns of meaning within the dataset. Moving away from a purely procedural or "codebook" approach, this reflexive stance prioritizes the researchers' interpretive lens as the primary instrument for generating knowledge. The analysis was guided by an inductive, latent-level coding process, in which themes were constructed from the bottom up rather than mapped onto pre-existing theoretical frameworks. This interpretive stance was critical to capturing the nuanced sociocultural realities of the DepEd context, enabling a deep exploration of how systemic pressures, such as administrative intensification, affect the core of teachers' subjective well-being. Through iterative cycles of reflection, initial codes were synthesized into themes that moved beyond description to reflect the bidirectional nature of work-life interference. Finally, these localized interpretations were integrated with the existing literature of Eden (2025) and Westover (2024) to establish theoretical depth and external validity.

Establishing Trustworthiness

To establish trustworthiness, the study utilized several strategies:

Member Checking: Participants were allowed to review their transcripts and the emerging themes to confirm that the findings accurately represented their perspectives.

Researcher Reflexivity: All essential tasks, including data analysis and interpretation, were performed solely by the researchers to maintain original human insight. While AI tools were used for grammar and organization, they were not used to manipulate data or generate findings.

Data Triangulation: Findings from structured interviews were cross-referenced with focus group discussions to validate the reported workload demands.

Research Ethics Compliance

The study was conducted in strict adherence to the ethical principles outlined in the Department of Education's governing policies. Formal ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee, ensuring that the research design, data collection protocols, and risk mitigation strategies met international standards for human subject research. Administrative permission was also secured from the Schools Division of Bohol and respective school heads prior to engagement.

Recognizing the sensitivity of discussing workplace stressors, which often involve critiques of institutional leadership and peer dynamics, the following safeguards were implemented:

Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation: Participants were provided with a comprehensive disclosure statement outlining the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any stage without professional repercussion. Written informed consent was obtained before any data collection commenced.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: To protect respondents' professional standing, all personal identifiers were replaced with alphanumeric codes (e.g., R1, R2). School names and specific geographic locations were redacted to prevent deductive identification within the Division.

Focus Group Discussion Ethical Protocols: Given that anonymity cannot be fully guaranteed in a group setting,

the researchers implemented a Group Confidentiality Agreement. At the start of each Focus Group Discussion, all participants collectively pledged to keep their peers' identities and specific comments strictly within the session. The researchers explicitly facilitated the sessions to focus on collective experiences rather than personal grievances against specific named individuals, thereby minimizing social and professional risk.

Data Integrity and Security: All digital recordings and transcripts were stored in encrypted, password-protected files accessible only to the primary researchers. Raw data will be permanently destroyed following the mandatory retention period, in compliance with the Data Privacy Act.

Furthermore, in accordance with ethical publishing standards, the researchers disclose the use of generative AI tools during manuscript preparation. The application of these tools was strictly confined to assistive linguistic and organizational roles, including grammar refinement, structural organization, and the enhancement of prose clarity.

Crucially, a definitive distinction was maintained between assistive utility and analytical authorship. All substantive intellectual tasks, including the conceptualization of the study, the reflexive thematic analysis of qualitative data, and the interpretive synthesis of findings, were performed exclusively by the human researchers. AI was not used to generate, manipulate, or analyze raw data, nor to formulate the study's conclusions.

To ensure the integrity and reliability of the work, all AI-generated suggestions were rigorously reviewed, edited, and verified by the authors. The researchers maintain full accountability for the final content, ensuring that the technology served only as a supportive aid for academic expression rather than a substitute for original scholarly inquiry or data interpretation.

Results and Discussion

Structural and Occupational Demands as Determinants of Teacher Well-Being

This theme serves as an interpretive construction of how the structural architecture of public education, manifested through administrative loads, curriculum implementation, and ancillary roles, encounters the personal boundaries of educators. Rather than a mere description of "busyness," this theme highlights the systemic encroachment of occupational demands into the domestic sphere, where exhaustion and role conflict serve as primary stressors that erode subjective well-being.

Temporal and Structural Encroachment on the Domestic Sphere

The data reveal a consistent pattern of professional obligations permeating the private domain, with a high frequency of participants identifying specific school-related tasks as the primary catalyst for destabilizing family equilibrium.

R1: *"My personal and family life becomes shaky... more time was intended for teaching than myself and family."*

R7: *"The school-related demands that interfere most... are seminars, meetings, and training sessions, which are usually scheduled on Saturdays."*

R10: *"I often struggle to prioritize my family... As the feeding coordinator, I collect supplies myself... 'Gulayan sa Paaralan' and Science Investigatory Projects also require weekend work."*

The nature of personal relationships is a structural byproduct of specialized administrative roles (e.g., feeding or ICT coordination) rather than general teaching duties. Cross-case analysis indicates that interference is most acute when non-compensated weekend labor, such as "Gulayan sa Paaralan" or Saturday seminars, strips educators of the agency required for domestic cohesion. This suggests that the interference is a systemic spillover in which the school's operational needs are prioritized over the teacher's right to rest in a disconnected state. These findings are confirmed by Van Eden (2025), who notes that heavy workloads inevitably precipitate work-family conflict, and Dalid (2025), who identifies ancillary assignments as significant sources of psychological strain. Individual efforts are often insufficient to mitigate this systemic encroachment; without institutional protection of domestic boundaries, structural demands remain a primary threat to teacher well-being.

Physiological and Cognitive Exhaustion from Curriculum Implementation

Thematic saturation was reached regarding post-work fatigue as a barrier to personal fulfillment. The recurring narrative involves a total depletion of energy linked to the intensity of the modern curriculum:

R1: *"I feel tired, exhausted, and drained. I do not have time for my family, especially for my child."*

R12: *"I often feel exhausted, especially with the demands of implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. This limits my time with my children..."*

Exhaustion functions as a mediator between curriculum implementation (e.g., MATATAG) and reduced well-being. The data suggest that fatigue is not merely physical but also cognitive; the workday's drain leaves teachers unable to fulfill their roles as parents, effectively restricting family bonding to chores and farm work rather than restorative interaction. This indicates that the structural intensity of current teaching mandates produces a state of energy depletion that renders a healthy work-life balance unattainable. Westover (2024) corroborates this, arguing that a lack of control over schedules and heavy administrative loads leads to employee fatigue, necessitating institutional recovery cultures. The physical and mental drain reported by teachers is an inevitable consequence of an overloaded structural framework that lacks built-in recovery periods.

Structural Rigidity and the Prioritization Crisis

When personal emergencies intersect with work hours, the structural rigidity of the school day forces a high-stress prioritization crisis.

R2: *"When a health issue is a concern esp. if a member of the family is being hospitalized, it is very difficult to handle."*

R7: *"When personal matters come up during working hours, I make it a point to set them aside... attend to those matters later."*

R11: *"Human as I am, I sometimes think about quitting my job and working somewhere closer to my family."*

The data reflect a pattern in which the unyielding nature of school duties imposes significant emotional labor. Teachers are forced to set aside urgent personal matters, leading to a sense of powerlessness. The mention of "quitting" (R11) as a response to these conflicts suggests that when structural demands are too rigid to accommodate family emergencies, the teacher's subjective well-being is compromised by a sense of being trapped by professional duty. Abou Assali & Al Abdouli (2024) confirm that overlooking these pressures increases stress, while Wang et al. (2023) highlight that school responsibilities often conflict with family needs during emergencies. The collision between family health needs and rigid school structures necessitates a shift toward more flexible institutional support to maintain teacher retention and mental health.

The Negotiation of Competing Demands on Relational Cohesion and Subjective Well-Being

This theme is an interpretive construction of the tension between professional obligations and the preservation of the domestic sphere. It transcends a mere list of grievances, instead illustrating how the structural rigidity of the teaching profession necessitates a constant prioritization dilemma that reshapes family dynamics and the teacher's internal sense of fulfillment.

Erosion of Relational Cohesion due to Occupational Displacement

The data reveal a consistent cross-case pattern of occupational displacement, in which school mandates physically or psychologically remove teachers from critical family milestones.

R1: *"When there is a celebration associated with my child, I choose my job first... not all school heads allow us... to attend activities associated with our child."*

R8: *"Ever since I worked in DepEd, I have always been absent during my kid's special performances in school... I envied other parents."*

R11: *"Being far from my family is one of my biggest challenges... I sometimes feel empty of their support."*

Thematic saturation is evident in the recurring language of envy, emptiness, and choiceless prioritization. These narratives signify that the competing demands are not merely about time management but represent a forced sacrifice of the parental role. The frequency of responses regarding missed school performances and distance-induced isolation indicates that the structural demand for physical presence at school acts as a primary wedge,

creating emotional distance and straining marital or parental bonds. These findings are confirmed by Chen et al. (2023) regarding guilt triggered by work-to-family conflict and by Mohamad et al. (2024) concerning the unique emotional distress inherent in commuter or distance-strained relationships. The structural requirements of the profession often act as a destabilizing force in the domestic sphere, where the inability to attend to familial milestones leaves the educator with a lasting emotional deficit.

The Duality of Professional Fulfillment and Subjective Well-Being

Contrastingly, participants frequently identified professional success as a vital source of emotional replenishment that mitigates the strain of competing demands.

R7: *"When I see my students learning, improving, or appreciating my efforts, it truly gives me energy and motivation."*

R12: *"Rewards like service credits, bonuses, and benefits... provided [are] energizing."*

This sub-theme highlights a paradoxical spillover effect. While work consumes time, the psychological rewards of student progress and institutional benefits provide the emotional capital necessary to sustain personal life. The cross-case pattern suggests that for many teachers, subjective well-being is a product of this trade-off, where professional meaning-making serves as a compensatory mechanism for the sacrifices detailed in sub-theme 2.1. This dynamic aligns with research highlighting the restorative power of student-teacher success (Eden, 2025) and the role of institutional incentives in sustaining educator motivation. Subjective well-being is not the absence of conflict but a fragile equilibrium where professional fulfillment provides the cognitive energy to endure domestic displacement.

Systemic Negotiation and the Perception of Achievable Balance

Teachers described balance not as a static state but as a continuous, high-effort negotiation characterized by compartmentalization and rapid task-switching.

R2: *"It is a matter of balancing your work and family... My work is part of my life."*

R3: *"I try to settle [personal matters] quickly during breaks or lunch time. If needed, I politely inform the school head."*

R7: *"When personal matters come up during working hours, I make it a point to set them aside... I will attend to those matters later."*

The frequency of responses that mention setting aside or settling quickly indicates a high reliance on individual agency to resolve systemic conflicts. The interpretation here is that balance is a construction of the teacher's professional identity, in which the job is so integrated into the self that the struggle is viewed as challenging yet achievable. However, the data also indicate a dependence on the benevolence of school heads (R3), suggesting that balance is often contingent on local administrative support rather than on clear policy. These results are supported by Duran et al. (2024), who emphasize that institutional support is a primary driver of emotional well-being, and by Bella (2023), who highlights the necessity of boundary-setting in high-demand roles. While educators view balance as achievable, it remains a fragile interpretive construction heavily dependent on individual coping strategies and the perceived supportiveness of the immediate workplace environment.

Coping Mechanisms and Strategies to Manage Work-Life Imbalance

The participants' accounts reveal that coping is not merely a set of tasks but a continuous negotiation of boundaries. Rather than passive endurance, the data suggest a transition toward adaptive agency, where teachers selectively prioritize roles to mitigate psychological erosion.

Adaptive Agency Through Temporal and Spatial Boundary Management

The data indicate that teachers do not merely manage time but exercise agency through a rigorous process of weighing professional commitments against personal needs. This involves a fluid negotiation of priorities, where the urgency of institutional demands often necessitates psychological trade-offs and the sacrifice of personal time. Participants highlighted that advance scheduling and multitasking serve as protective buffers. However, they also emphasized the strategic importance of mental compartmentalization, intentionally separating school-related cognitive loads from the domestic sphere.

R2: *"You have to balance between work & personal life, if what demands most, the other will have to suffer."*

R3: *"I set priorities and schedule tasks in advance... Sometimes I adjust personal plans to accommodate urgent school needs."*

R8: *"It's a matter of time management... every second, every minute, every hour is important."*

R12: *"I complete all school tasks at school to avoid bringing work home, allowing me to focus on my family."*

These findings suggest that time management is a misnomer for what is actually a defensive strategy against role blurring. The transition from weighing priorities to setting boundaries represents a shift from reactive task-handling to proactive self-preservation. For instance, R12's intentional choice to complete all work within school hours is not just an efficiency measure but a mental firewall designed to preserve emotional capacity for family engagement. However, the data also reveal a significant tension: while teachers strive for strict compartmentalization, the increasing volume of ancillary tasks, such as "Gulayan sa Paaralan" and documentation, creates highly permeable boundaries that often collapse under institutional weight.

This aligns with Eloor & Menon (2024), who highlight that teachers face difficult sacrifices when heavy workloads force them to weigh work against personal matters. Furthermore, the reliance on advanced planning to mitigate teaching demands is supported by Misra (2021), while the use of efficient task completion to avoid burnout reflects the post-pandemic coping strategies identified by Jumdani (2024). Finally, the need to delineate working hours to maintain well-being is a critical component of boundary-setting theory (Bella, 2023). Ultimately, while individual adaptive strategies like prioritization and compartmentalization offer temporary relief, they are often insufficient against systemic encroachment. The struggle to maintain these boundaries underscores a critical need for organizational reforms that respect the sanctity of personal time to prevent long-term professional exhaustion.

Relational and Emotional Resilience via Collaborative Support Systems

Educators navigate the emotional and physical toll of their roles by mobilizing social and organizational capital. This involves two distinct yet related behaviors: transparent communication of professional demands to family members to align domestic expectations, and strategic engagement of peer and supervisory networks for task redistribution. Simultaneously, teachers exercise high levels of emotional regulation, consciously suppressing personal stressors to maintain instructional focus and employing micro-breaks to mitigate overwhelm.

R2: *"Let it be known to my family... so that they can adjust also as part of my job, which is the bread & butter."*

R9: *"I manage by organizing my schedule... and asking for support from colleagues in our school when tasks become overwhelming."*

The synthesis of communication and emotional regulation reveals that professionalism in teaching is a collaborative effort. Seeking support is not a sign of deficit but a calculated mobilization of resources to ensure instructional continuity. By involving family in the "bread and butter" realities of the profession, teachers create a shared domestic understanding that reduces friction. Moreover, the practice of setting aside personal issues (R7) and using physical displacement (R8) to regulate emotions demonstrates a sophisticated level of emotional labor. These behaviors function as a collective resilience framework where the teacher's personal stability is bolstered by both their immediate social circle and their internal regulatory capacity.

The importance of proactive communication with family members to manage work-family conflict is corroborated by Nethavhani & Dipela (2025). Additionally, Cuckovic (2022) emphasizes the role of social support and constructive interactions with colleagues as factors in resilience. Regarding internal regulation, the practice of compartmentalizing stress to prioritize student learning is a recognized tool for maintaining professional efficacy (Ugli, 2023), while physical breaks are established coping mechanisms for handling acute emotional strain (Rathore et al., 2024).

Institutional and Social Support Mechanisms as an Interpretive Construction of Efficacy

This theme serves as an interpretive construction of the multifaceted support systems, both formal and informal, that educators navigate. Rather than merely listing categories of assistance, this analysis conceptualizes support as a relational dynamic that either validates or marginalizes the teacher's professional identity. The data reveal that the effectiveness of these mechanisms is contingent upon the authenticity of leadership engagement and the depth of communal integration.

Administrative Responsiveness and Leadership Mentorship

A high frequency of participants identified the approachability of school heads as a primary structural support, particularly emphasizing mentorship for early-career educators. However, the data also reveal a cross-case pattern

where institutional backing is perceived as a prerequisite for professional stability:

R3: *"Our school head is approachable and open to concerns."*

R7: *"They guide me, especially as a newly hired teacher."*

The interpretation of administrative support transcends simple technical guidance; it represents a psychological safety net. For newly hired teachers (R7), leadership functions as a critical orienting force. Conversely, the repeated emphasis on approachability suggests that, in the absence of such openness, the school's hierarchical structure becomes a source of stress rather than support. Saturation was reached regarding the dual nature of this support: while guidance is present, its efficacy is tied to the school head's personal disposition rather than standardized institutional policy. These findings are confirmed by Zulu et al. (2025), who posit that approachable leadership enhances teacher retention and morale by fostering a culture of mentorship. While administrative support is a vital catalyst for job satisfaction, its reliance on individual leadership styles underscores a need for more systemic, non-biased institutional frameworks to ensure consistent teacher well-being.

Socio-Communal Integration and the Newcomer Barrier

The data illustrate a divergence in how educators experience communal connection. While long-term integration provides a sense of value, a distinct pattern of exclusion emerges among those in transition or new to the workplace:

R7: *"I feel a sense of belonging in the school community... I feel welcomed and valued."*

R1: *"No, as a newbie in the workplace, I do not have any say in everything."*

The sense of belonging is not a default state but an interpretive construction of the school's social climate. The contrast between R7 and R1 highlights a seniority-dependent support threshold. For newbies (R1), the structural demand for compliance often silences their professional voice, indicating that the school community can function as both a supportive network and a gatekeeping mechanism. This pattern suggests that the effectiveness of social support is highly sensitive to workplace tenure and hierarchical inclusion. This duality aligns with Westover (2024), who argues that socially connected workplaces drive performance, while Madhosingh-Hector & Seals (2022) contrast this with the inherent challenges of navigating unfamiliar workplace cultures. Social support is an essential pillar of well-being, yet its benefits remain fragmented; intentional inclusion strategies are required to bridge the gap between established staff and marginalized newcomers.

Evaluative Outcomes of Work-Life Imbalance on Professional Efficacy and Holistic Well-Being

This theme functions as an interpretive construction of the systemic impact that occurs when professional mandates and personal recovery periods fail to remain distinct. Rather than functioning as a mere descriptive list of symptoms, this theme captures the fundamental shift in pedagogical agency and internal wellness that results from chronic role-stretching. It highlights how the erosion of boundaries transforms teaching from a vocation of purpose into a struggle for functional sustainability.

The Attrition of Professional Efficacy and Instructional Agency

The data indicate that professional confidence and pedagogical reach are directly compromised by exhaustion stemming from structural overload. High-frequency responses suggest that while teachers desire to bend strategies for learners, the physical reality of exhaustion limits this instructional flexibility.

R1: *"I am hundred percent confident... If possible, I will bend my strategies in teaching so that my learners will learn best."*

R10: *"I am happy being a teacher, but often feel exhausted due to heavy work demands and extra responsibilities."*

R12: *"Working hard is essential... [but] it can feel really exhausting."*

Cross-case patterns reveal a saturation point where pedagogical agency becomes aspirational rather than operational. The recurring mention of exhaustion (R10, R12) alongside confidence (R1) implies a tension: the teacher's internal drive to innovate is structurally throttled by the physical energy required to sustain ancillary loads. In this context, instructional effectiveness is not a static skill but a fragile resource that diminishes as institutional demands increase. This pattern confirms the findings of Gudelos & Mabitad (2025), who established that excessive ancillary duties among Filipino educators negatively impact overall instructional performance and well-being. The structural volume of tasks creates a professional paradox in which the educator's physiological

limits consistently undermine the desire for instructional excellence.

Relational Displacement and the Compromised Domestic Identity

Thematic saturation was reached regarding the spillover effect, where the dissolution of work-life boundaries necessitates the strategic depletion of personal reserves to maintain professional standing.

R9: *"The balance is challenging because of the dual roles I perform, but I do my best to maintain it by staying organized."*

R11: *"The balance... is challenging but manageable, requiring... ongoing effort to stay connected with my loved ones."*

R12: *"This limits my time with my children, and family bonding is now mostly restricted to chores..."*

Interpretive analysis suggests that balance is not a state of equilibrium but a continuous act of role-stretching. For these educators, the teacher identity often cannibalizes the parent or partner identity. The narrative that bonding is restricted to chores (R12) serves as a saturation indicator for the loss of quality domestic life, showing that the outcome of imbalance is the displacement of relational depth by functional survival. These experiences align with Lanzaderas & Omandam (2025), who emphasize that educators in dual roles often face a taxing negotiation where professional efficacy is sustained through personal sacrifice. The lack of institutional boundaries forces a redistribution of energy that prioritizes school compliance at the direct expense of familial cohesion and personal identity.

Fluctuating Subjective Well-Being and the Teleological Struggle

The participants' accounts reveal that subjective well-being is not a constant state of contentment but a fluctuating equilibrium maintained through a mix of vocational purpose and economic necessity.

R10: *"Overall, I rate my happiness 7/10, as there are frequent challenges, similar to the ups and downs of married life."*

R11: *"I strive to maintain a healthy work-life balance by setting boundaries and prioritizing self-care..."*

R12: *"Working hard is essential to provide for my family, as absence leads to reduced salary and affects our livelihood."*

The "7/10" happiness rating (R10) signifies a pragmatic acceptance of professional strain. Cross-case analysis shows that motivation is dual-layered: while student progress provides intrinsic joy, the fear of reduced salary (R12) acts as a structural tether. The outcome is a teleological struggle where teachers remain committed not solely due to fulfillment, but because the structural demands of the role are inextricably linked to their family's economic survival. This dual motivation reflects the findings of Demir, Yavuz, and Yavuz (2024) regarding student-driven purpose and echoes the boundary-setting strategies noted in Primary School Teachers in England (2025). Teacher well-being remains in a state of unstable equilibrium, where the joy of student success is the only buffer against the weight of economic pressure and systemic overload.

Conclusion

This study contributes evidence that work-life balance among DepEd teachers is a dynamic, bidirectional process shaped by systemic workload pressures and individual adaptive strategies. The findings illustrate that professional mandates characterized by administrative ancillary roles and extended instructional hours frequently permeate the domestic sphere, precipitating role-stretching and emotional exhaustion. Conversely, personal exigencies and domestic responsibilities intermittently intersect with professional duties, creating a continuous tension between the two domains.

Notably, the data reveal that educators demonstrate significant resilience by employing a repertoire of adaptive mechanisms, including meticulous time management and intentional boundary setting. Subjective well-being is further bolstered by vocational fulfillment derived from student achievement and a deeply rooted sense of purpose. While institutional support remains a critical determinant of success, its efficacy is often contingent upon the consistency and perceived fairness of school leadership.

Ultimately, this research provides several key contributions to the field of educational management:

1. Extends the understanding of work-life balance as a context-dependent construct, specifically highlighting how the unique landscape of the Philippine public school system dictates the nature of role conflict.

2. Highlights the critical interaction between institutional demands and personal coping mechanisms, moving beyond descriptive accounts of stress to a more nuanced analysis of teacher agency.
3. Contributes robust qualitative evidence in a Philippine DepEd setting, offering localized insights essential for developing responsive organizational policies.
4. While the systemic overload inherent in the current educational framework remains a primary source of strain, the balance between professional obligations and personal recovery is manageable under certain conditions, functioning as a sustained "give and take" mediated by both individual effort and institutional climate.

Implications and Recommendations

Based on findings characterizing work-life balance as a bidirectional, systemic negotiation, the following recommendations are proposed to mitigate role-stretching and enhance the subjective well-being of public-school educators.

- **Policy Level: DepEd Workload Reframing.** The Department of Education should re-evaluate the structural distribution of administrative ancillary roles that currently permeate the domestic sphere. Policies must transition from a total availability model to one that mandates protected recovery periods. This includes the formal institutionalization of no-contact hours during weekends and the auditing of school-level assignments to ensure that administrative tasks do not supersede instructional mandates.
- **Institutional Level: Leadership as a Buffer.** School heads and division leaders should adopt predictive leadership practices that prioritize consistency and perceived fairness in task distribution. Instead of reactive assignment of weekend seminars or "Gulayan sa Paaralan" duties, institutional climates should foster boundary-respecting cultures. Leadership training should focus on recognizing signs of emotional exhaustion and providing structural flexibility during periods of domestic exigency.
- **Practice Level: Strategic Agency.** At the classroom level, teachers are encouraged to refine their repertoire of adaptive mechanisms. Professional development should move beyond generic stress management toward "Pedagogical Efficiency Training," helping educators utilize meticulous time management and intentional boundary-setting as legitimate tools for professional sustainability rather than mere survival tactics.

Directions for Future Research

To extend the localized insights provided by this qualitative inquiry, future scholarly work should focus on the following trajectories:

- **Need for Longitudinal Studies:** Future research should utilize longitudinal designs to track the trajectory of teacher well-being across an entire academic year, identifying specific peak-strain periods (e.g., end-of-quarter grading or curriculum transitions) to better inform the timing of institutional support.
- **Comparative Studies Across Divisions:** A comparative analysis across different school divisions (e.g., urban vs. rural or island vs. mainland settings) is necessary to determine how geographic and socio-economic variables influence the nature of role conflict and the availability of resources.
- **Evaluation of Intervention Effectiveness:** Empirical evaluations of existing wellness programs or workload-reduction pilot projects are essential. Research must move toward testing which specific institutional interventions—such as administrative assistants or hybrid meeting formats effectively reduce the spillover effect into the domestic domain.

Contributions of Authors

Author 1: conceptualization, data gathering, data analysis, manuscript writing, editing, revision

Author 2: conceptualization, data gathering, data analysis, manuscript writing

Author 3: conceptualization, data gathering, data analysis, manuscript writing

Author 4: conceptualization, data gathering, data analysis, manuscript writing

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