
TEACHERS INTRINSIC MOTIVATION AND THEIR OCCUPATIONAL STRESS MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study examined to find out the relationship between teachers' intrinsic motivation and their occupational stress management in public elementary schools in Pangantucan North District, Division of Bukidnon with 168 teachers respondents, during school year 2025–2026. Intrinsic motivation was assessed in terms of interest, perceived competence, and value, while occupational stress management covered workload and work pressure management, support and relationships at work, control and autonomy in the workplace, and work-life balance and stress coping strategies. Using a descriptive-correlational design, data were collected from 168 elementary school teachers through standardized questionnaires adapted from Bjorklund (2021). Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) described the levels of intrinsic motivation and stress management, and Pearson r . Results revealed that teachers reported high levels of intrinsic motivation across all dimensions, as well as high levels of occupational stress management in all identified areas. However, no significant relationship was found between intrinsic motivation and occupational stress management, suggesting that these constructs function independently in supporting teacher well-being. The study recommends that teachers sustain their intrinsic motivation through reflective practices and mentoring, while school administrators implement regular workload audits and proactive work-life policies to preserve effective stress management. Future research is encouraged to explore mediating or moderating variables, compare different school contexts, and use qualitative methods to better understand the mechanisms linking motivation and stress management.

KEYWORDS: Teachers Intrinsic Motivation, Occupational Stress, Management

INTRODUCTION

In the Philippine basic education system, teaching is widely acknowledged as one of the most demanding and emotionally taxing professions. Teachers, particularly in public schools, are burdened with a growing number of responsibilities beyond classroom instruction—ranging from paperwork to implementing school-wide programs and initiatives. These multifaceted roles often lead to overwhelming workloads, long hours, and heightened pressure to meet performance standards. Over time, these conditions contribute significantly to occupational stress, affecting not only teachers' productivity but also their mental and emotional well-being. The increasing stress levels in the teaching profession demand an urgent need to explore internal factors, such as intrinsic motivation, that can help teachers cope and thrive in challenging work environments.

Despite the growing attention to teacher welfare, current interventions in most schools remain externally focused emphasizing administrative adjustments, benefits, or workload redistribution while underexploring the role of intrinsic motivation in buffering stress. Intrinsic motivation, defined as the internal drive to perform tasks for personal satisfaction and meaningfulness rather than external rewards, plays a critical role in sustaining teachers' commitment and psychological resilience. However, empirical studies have been limited in their examination of how this motivational factor interacts with stress management mechanisms in real school contexts. This gap leaves educational leaders with an incomplete understanding of how to develop programs that empower teachers from within and enhance their adaptive capacities.

Moreover, there remains a problematic mismatch between how administrators frame occupational stress and how teachers actually experience it. While many initiatives highlight structural solutions such as reducing teaching load or extending leaves—teachers often report that their motivation to teach stems from personal values, sense of purpose, and passion for student learning. These internal sources of motivation appear to play a crucial role in buffering stress, yet they are seldom captured in policy discourse and school-based wellness programs. The absence of research examining intrinsic motivation as a self-regulatory force in stress management signals a need to investigate this phenomenon in the Philippine educational setting, particularly in light of the challenges posed by post-pandemic educational recovery, digital demands, and learning gaps.

Recent studies affirm that intrinsic motivation enables teachers to maintain a sense of purpose, which serves as a psychological anchor in stressful conditions. Santos and Reonal (2024) found that teachers who perceived their work as meaningful reported lower levels of

burnout despite facing administrative constraints and limited resources. Their findings emphasized that personal growth, commitment to student success, and professional identity significantly influence how teachers respond to stress. The study highlighted that intrinsically motivated teachers displayed stronger coping mechanisms, such as proactive problem-solving and emotion regulation. Thus, cultivating intrinsic motivation is essential not only for teacher retention but also for sustaining instructional quality.

Similarly, Alvarado and Ocampo (2023) concluded that teachers with higher intrinsic motivation demonstrate greater self-efficacy and emotional resilience, which contribute to their ability to manage stress without external reinforcement. In their study across five divisions in Mindanao, intrinsic motivation was positively correlated with psychological well-being and job satisfaction. They recommended that school-based professional development should incorporate reflective practices, value affirmation, and teacher-driven goal setting to strengthen intrinsic motivation. These practices allow teachers to reconnect with their vocation and derive fulfillment from their work, even amid organizational pressures. The research affirms that internal motivation serves as a buffer against occupational stressors, making it a vital area for educational policy and school leadership.

Furthermore, research by De Jesus and Arriola (2025) emphasized that the interplay between intrinsic motivation and workplace culture influences stress management. The schools that nurture autonomy, collaboration, and recognition tend to reinforce intrinsic motivation among teachers. These schools also reported lower absenteeism and higher teacher morale. Their findings point to the importance of aligning school culture with teachers' internal drivers to support long-term engagement and stress regulation. Addressing occupational stress, therefore, requires a holistic strategy that recognizes both environmental and psychological dimensions of teacher motivation.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is anchored on Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (1985) and Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986). Deci and Ryan emphasized that intrinsic motivation is driven by the fulfillment of basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these needs are met, individuals are more likely to exhibit persistence, engagement, and resilience in their tasks, such as teaching. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory posits that human behavior is influenced by the dynamic interaction of personal factors, behavioral patterns, and environmental conditions. In the teaching profession, these theories underscore that intrinsic beliefs, self-perceptions of efficacy, and

contextual work conditions collectively determine how teachers respond to occupational stressors. Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive lens to examine how internal motivation and external work conditions affect stress management among teachers.

The study is premised on the idea that teachers' ability to manage occupational stress is largely influenced by their intrinsic motivation, particularly in challenging school environments. Intrinsic motivation refers to the internal drive to perform a task out of genuine interest, passion, and commitment rather than external rewards. Teachers with high intrinsic motivation are often more resilient and better able to cope with stressors such as heavy workloads, classroom behavioral issues, and administrative pressures. In contrast, those with low motivation may experience faster burnout, reduced job satisfaction, and compromised teaching performance. This intrinsic force, however, does not operate in isolation—it is shaped and sometimes strained by the conditions of the work environment.

In this study, the working environment is treated as a crucial moderating factor that affects how motivation is sustained or depleted. The school setting—comprising leadership support, collegial relationships, organizational culture, and physical infrastructure—can either buffer or intensify occupational stress. A teacher might be highly motivated but still struggle to manage stress effectively in a toxic or unsupportive environment. Conversely, a nurturing and professionally enriching school climate can help teachers better harness their intrinsic motivation, reducing the impact of stress and promoting well-being. Thus, the quality of the working environment can either hinder or enhance a teacher's ability to remain motivated and resilient.

This interaction between internal and external variables mirrors what Filipino scholars such as Dela Cruz and Espinosa (2025) and Reyes (2024) argue—that teachers' psychological well-being and motivation are deeply connected to the support systems available within their schools. These authors highlight that while Filipino teachers are often intrinsically driven by their calling, the burden of systemic inefficiencies and emotional labor can dampen their professional enthusiasm. They recommend that school leaders implement mental wellness programs, reduce bureaucratic tasks, and foster positive school cultures to sustain teachers' motivation and help them effectively manage occupational stress.

Furthermore, frameworks such as the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) emphasize professional well-being and motivation as core dimensions of effective teaching. The PPST underlines the necessity for supportive environments where teachers can flourish and be empowered to pursue continuous growth despite occupational challenges. Filipino education experts like David and Tolentino (2025) also note that a teacher's commitment to

their vocation is reinforced when school systems prioritize mental health, provide clear recognition, and facilitate open communication channels. These local perspectives affirm that cultivating intrinsic motivation is not merely an individual task but a collective institutional responsibility.

In light of these theoretical and empirical foundations, this study aims to explore the extent to which intrinsic motivation enables teachers to effectively manage occupational stress in their specific work environments. It examines how personal passion, internal values, and professional calling interact with external workplace conditions to influence stress responses. The framework assumes a reciprocal and dynamic relationship between motivation and environmental factors, suggesting that sustained teacher well-being and performance are achieved when both internal and external conditions are aligned. Ultimately, the study seeks to provide insights that may inform school-based wellness programs, teacher training, and institutional policies geared toward supporting teachers' mental health and motivation in the long term.

As shown in the schematic diagram, the independent variable on the left side contains the teachers' intrinsic motivation in terms of interest, perceived competence, and value. On the right side of the diagram is the teachers' occupational stress in the working environment in terms of workload and work pressure management, support and relationships at work, control and autonomy in the workplace, and work-life balance and stress coping strategies. Figure 1 presents the schematic diagram of the study.

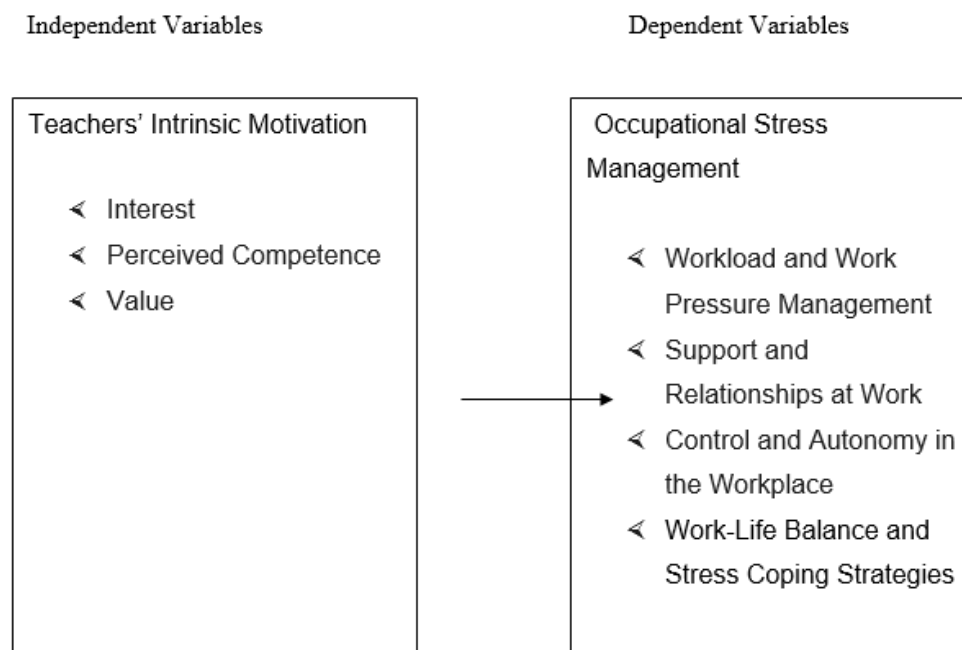


Figure 1. A schematic diagram showing the relationships of variables.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to assess the relationship between the teachers' intrinsic motivation and their occupational stress management in the elementary schools of Pangantucan North District, Division of Bukidnon, during the school year 2025-2026.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of teachers' intrinsic motivation in terms of interest, perceived competence, and value?
2. What is the level of teachers' occupational stress management of: workload and work pressure management, support and relationships at work, control and autonomy in the workplace, and work-life balance and stress coping strategies?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the level of teachers' intrinsic motivation and their occupational stress management?

Significance of the Study

The results of this study were of great help for the following groups of individuals who made this a reference material:

To the Learners. This study indirectly benefits the learners by fostering a learning environment facilitated by motivated and mentally resilient teachers. When educators are intrinsically driven and better equipped to manage occupational stress, their classroom performance improves resulting in more engaging, supportive, and stable instruction.

Learners are more likely to thrive academically and emotionally when their teachers are mentally healthy and professionally fulfilled. The reduction in teacher burnout can translate to more consistent teaching presence, higher learner motivation, and enhanced classroom relationships. Ultimately, this contributes to the holistic development of learners, both cognitively and affectively.

To the teachers, this study was particularly significant to secondary school teachers, as it sheds light on the importance of intrinsic motivation in mitigating workplace stress. The findings can help them recognize their internal drivers and the psychological mechanisms that sustain professional satisfaction even in the face of stressors. Moreover, the study may serve as a guide in adopting self-regulation strategies, wellness practices, and peer support mechanisms. Through an improved understanding of the relationship between motivation and stress management, teachers may gain greater control over their professional well-being and overall job performance. This could lead to increased teacher retention, morale, and personal satisfaction.

To the School Administrators, School heads and administrators would benefit from this study by gaining insights into how intrinsic motivation supports teachers' stress coping mechanisms. It can inform the development of school-based interventions, professional development programs, and policy reforms that promote teacher well-being. Administrators may use the results to create a more enabling work environment through recognition systems, psychological support services, and collaborative school culture. Understanding these dynamics can also help reduce absenteeism, improve faculty retention, and elevate instructional quality. This contributes to more effective school management and organizational success.

To future researchers, this study opens a rich area of investigation for those interested in teacher psychology, occupational wellness, and motivation theories in the Philippine context. It provides empirical groundwork for longitudinal, experimental, or qualitative inquiries on teacher well-being and stress resilience. Researchers may build on this framework to explore specific variables such as gender, age, teaching experience, or teaching modality. Additionally, future scholars can examine the role of institutional support or policy in shaping motivational climates. This study enriches the local literature on educational psychology and informs future innovations in school workforce development.

Delimitation of the Study

This study focused on examining the intrinsic motivation of teachers in relation to how they manage occupational stress within their working environment. Specifically, it investigates the internal psychological factors such as self-determination, personal values, job satisfaction, and professional fulfillment that influence how elementary school teachers in Pangantucan North District, Division of Bukidnon cope with stressors arising from their professional roles. The study aims to explore the extent to which intrinsic motivation contributes to stress management strategies, emotional resilience, and workplace performance.

The scope of the research was limited to elementary teachers employed in the public schools of Pangantucan North District during School Year 2025–2026. The study does not include secondary or tertiary education teachers, non-teaching personnel, or school administrators. Moreover, it only covers internal motivational factors and excludes external motivators such as salary, awards, or administrative promotions.

In terms of stress factors, the research delimits itself to occupational stress encountered within the school setting such as workload, learner behavior, administrative demands, and lack of resources and does not extend to personal or domestic stressors. The study also does not attempt to provide a clinical or psychological diagnosis but rather aims to describe patterns and correlations between intrinsic motivation and stress management practices.

The findings of this research are confined to the participants' responses during the data-gathering period and rely primarily on self-reported data through validated survey instruments. As such, the accuracy of the results may depend on the honesty and introspection of the participants. Nevertheless, the study is expected to provide meaningful insights that may inform wellness programs, teacher support systems, and future professional development initiatives in similar rural and public-school contexts.

Review of the Literature

Teachers' Intrinsic Motivation

De Guzman and Lantajo (2025) found that teachers who reported higher levels of intrinsic motivation demonstrated sustained commitment to learner-centered pedagogy despite systemic challenges. Their study of public elementary school teachers in Region IV-A revealed that personal values and a sense of purpose were the primary driving forces for instructional resilience. Respondents frequently cited internal satisfaction, rather than compensation, as their main source of teaching motivation. The data highlighted a strong correlation between intrinsic goals and innovative classroom practices. The authors

concluded that cultivating teachers' internal sense of purpose is key to long-term engagement.

Domingo and Tabanao (2024) observed that intrinsically motivated teachers were more likely to pursue self-initiated professional development opportunities. Their mixed-methods study in Northern Mindanao found that self-driven efforts such as enrolling in graduate studies or attending voluntary training were rooted in personal growth ambitions. Teachers expressed that their motivation stemmed from passion and a desire to improve learner outcomes. The results further indicated that intrinsic factors outweighed external incentives in sustaining teacher excellence. Domingo and Tabanao concluded that policies should strengthen internal goal-setting to promote continuous improvement.

Bautista and Encarnacion (2025) asserted that teachers' intrinsic motivation directly influenced their classroom management and instructional creativity. Their research in Bicol public schools revealed that internally motivated teachers used more varied, learner-responsive approaches compared to their extrinsically motivated counterparts. Most participants attributed their energy and drive to a love for teaching rather than administrative pressures. Moreover, the study linked higher job satisfaction with greater perceived autonomy and meaningful teaching experiences. The authors recommended enhancing teacher voice in school planning to reinforce intrinsic drivers.

Interest

Del Mundo and Reyes (2024) discovered that elementary teachers in Calabarzon who described teaching as "enjoyable" reported higher levels of instructional creativity and satisfaction in lesson planning. They found that educators who look forward to preparing lessons often try innovative strategies like storytelling and hands-on activities. These teachers stated that interacting with students energized them and deepened their commitment. They also noted that observing students understand new concepts brought a profound sense of accomplishment. The study concluded that genuine interest in teaching underpins sustained enthusiasm and professional growth.

Santiago and Parks (2025) found that secondary science teachers in Northern Mindanao expressed that trying new instructional methods gave them excitement and professional renewal. These teachers reported that preparation routines felt enjoyable rather than burdensome because of the anticipation of positive classroom interactions. They described feelings of energy and accomplishment when students engaged with the content successfully. According to the study, such joy-driven motivation encouraged reflection and continuous

improvement of instructional practices. The authors concluded that interest-driven work inspires long-term teaching commitment.

Perceived Competence

Alcaraz and Dizon (2025) explored public school teachers' sense of competence in curriculum adaptation, reporting that 88% of respondents felt confident modifying lessons for diverse learners. Their findings emphasized how self-perceived instructional adaptability directly contributes to motivation and lower burnout levels. Teachers with higher perceived competence displayed proactive engagement in lesson delivery. The study showed a strong correlation between confidence and classroom management strategies. The authors concluded that boosting competence improves intrinsic motivation across teaching levels.

Villarta and Montinola (2024) studied the link between competence and technology integration among intermediate-grade teachers in Ilocos. Results indicated that teachers who were confident using tech tools such as LMS and digital media showed higher instructional innovation. Their self-efficacy reinforced their autonomy in choosing diverse strategies. They concluded that perceived competence is foundational to sustaining interest in tech-enabled learning. The study recommends regular upskilling to further enhance teacher motivation.

Reyes and Alonto (2025) examined how perceived teaching skills influence professional satisfaction among Grade 6 teachers in Muslim Mindanao. They found that teachers with high confidence in lesson execution and classroom discipline had significantly lower stress levels. Their intrinsic motivation was sustained even in multi-grade teaching settings. Respondents emphasized that competence alleviates pressure during high-stakes assessment periods. The authors urged inclusion of competence-building strategies in teacher induction programs.

Value

Marquez and Duque (2025) found that teachers who view their profession as socially valuable are more engaged in community initiatives and instructional innovation. They reported that educators who believe teaching contributes meaningfully to society persist even amidst systemic challenges. These teachers often describe their work as life-changing for students and transformative for communities. They expressed that helping students acquire critical skills provides deep meaning to their roles. Marquez and Duque concluded that recognizing the broader value of teaching sustains intrinsic motivation and professional perseverance.

The Methodology

Research Design

The investigation utilized the descriptive-correlational research design. The data gathered was analyzed quantitatively. Descriptive method will be used for the study to describe the teachers' intrinsic motivation in terms of interest, perceived competence, and value; find out the teachers' occupational stress management in terms of: workload and work pressure management, support and relationships at work, control and autonomy in the workplace, and work-life balance and stress coping strategies; and correlate the significant relationship between the level of teachers' intrinsic motivation and their occupational stress management.

Research Locale

This study was conducted in the elementary schools under the scope of Pangantucan North District, one of the educational districts within the Division of Bukidnon, during School Year 2025–2026. The Pangantucan North District is a rural educational cluster situated in the municipality of Pangantucan, located in the southwestern part of Bukidnon Province, Northern Mindanao, Philippines.

Pangantucan is a first-class municipality known for its rich agricultural lands, diverse cultural heritage, and proximity to the majestic Mount Kalatungan Range Natural Park, a protected area that serves as one of the biodiversity hotspots in the country. The municipality is predominantly inhabited by indigenous people (notably the Manobo tribe), lowland settlers, and farmers whose livelihood centers on corn, sugarcane, coffee, banana, and vegetable farming. Despite its vast natural resources and growing population, many areas within the municipality remain geographically isolated and disadvantaged, posing challenges to the equitable delivery of basic education services.

The Pangantucan North District office is based at Pangantucan Central Elementary School, which serves as the district's administrative and instructional hub. The district encompasses several elementary schools scattered across remote barangays, namely: Adtuyon Elementary School, Barandias Elementary School, Concepcion Elementary School, Jarque Elementary School, Kidanggin Elementary School, Lantay Elementary School, Mendiz Elementary School, New Eden Elementary School, Portulin Elementary School, San Isidro Elementary School, San Miguel Elementary School, San Vicente Elementary School, and Sinasaan Elementary School.

These schools cater to multi-grade learners and operate in far-flung communities characterized by rugged terrain, intermittent access to electricity and internet, and limited

transportation infrastructure. Teachers often walk long distances or ride motorcycles over unpaved roads just to reach their stations, while learners cross rivers or footpaths to attend classes.

Given these contextual realities, Pangantucan North District presents a relevant and meaningful setting for studying educational interventions particularly those aimed at improving school-based programs such as disaster risk reduction, learner support, and inclusive education. The selected schools provide a rich ground for observing the implementation of educational practices in a rural, multicultural, and disaster-prone context, making the findings of this study potentially valuable for both local and national education stakeholders.

Findings

There are the findings of the study:

The levels of teachers' intrinsic motivation in terms of interest, perceived competence, and value were all high.

The levels of teachers' occupational stress management of workload and work pressure management, support and relationships at work, control and autonomy in the workplace, and work-life balance and stress coping strategies were also all high.

There is no significant relationship between the level of teachers' intrinsic motivation and their occupational stress management.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There were the conclusions derived from the study:

The teachers exhibit high levels of intrinsic motivation across interest, perceived competence, and value.

The teachers demonstrate high levels of occupational stress management across all dimensions workload and work pressure management, support and relationships at work, control and autonomy in the workplace, and work-life balance and stress coping strategies—indicating effective strategies that buffer against common professional stressors.

Teachers' intrinsic motivation cannot be associated with their occupational stress management. These factors operate independently in sustaining teacher well-being. While high intrinsic motivation fuels passion and commitment, effective stress management appears driven by other factors.

The following were recommended in the study:

Teachers may sustain intrinsic motivation through reflective practices. They may regularly engage in journaling or peer discussions about their teaching joys and successes to maintain high interest levels, such as documenting moments of student breakthroughs that reinforce their sense of accomplishment. They could also mentor novice educators to reinforce personal purpose. Share experiences of intrinsic rewards with new teachers through informal mentoring, amplifying their own motivation by modeling passion for learner impact and professional fulfillment.

The school administrators may consider effective workload systems through regular audits. School administrators may conduct periodic workload reviews and provide flexible task prioritization tools, building on teachers' high proficiency in managing demands and deadlines to prevent future overburdening. They can also promote wellness sustainability with proactive work-life policies.

Since the findings and results of the study are not significant, the school administrator may revisit their (SIP) School Improvement Plan and review the workload of the teachers that the results of another study will be significant and teacher as well as the learner will benefit.

The future researchers may consider exploring mediating or moderating variables in larger samples. Future researchers may investigate potential mediators like organizational culture or coping styles that might explain the lack of direct relationship. They may also examine specific motivation-stress interactions across contexts. Conduct comparative studies between urban/rural or elementary/secondary teachers to identify subgroups where intrinsic motivation may influence stress management. Incorporate qualitative methods for deeper insights. Complement quantitative correlation analyses with interviews or focus groups to understand how high intrinsic motivation and stress management coexist independently, revealing underlying mechanisms not captured by surveys.

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