


Chapter 6


Caring at a Cost: Exploring Compassion Fatigue, Emotional Labor, and Well- Being Among Filipino Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Teaching is an emotionally demanding profession, especially in the Philippines, where public school teachers must manage large class sizes, limited resources, and extensive administrative duties. This chapter explores emotional labor in teaching, emphasizing how Filipino educators navigate their emotions through surface and deep acting strategies. It also examines compassion fatigue, which results from prolonged exposure to students' struggles, leading to emotional exhaustion and reduced empathy. Teachers in low-income communities or those working with students with disabilities are particularly at risk. The chapter highlights significant factors contributing to compassion fatigue and proposes evidence-based interventions, such as mindfulness programs, peer support groups, and institutional reforms. Addressing emotional labor and compassion fatigue is essential for maintaining teacher well-being and enhancing the quality of education in the Philippines.

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INTRODUCTION

Most teachers show care and compassion toward their students as part of their dedication to their profession. Filipino teachers, particularly public school teachers, teach 40 to 80 students per class, with some even higher. While care and compassion are identified as promising constructs for promoting psychological well-being among learners (O'Toole & Dobutowitsch, 2023), they can cause compassion fatigue in the teacher (Fute et al., 2022). In the long run, these contribute to burnout and secondary traumatic stress (Oberg et al., 2023).

Teaching can include more than delivering instruction; it can consist of ensuring the competencies are met, assessing students, and grading them. It is considered a multitasking profession with cognitive and emotional components (Kariou et al., 2021). Teachers use emotional labor at work. Emotional labor refers to regulating, controlling, or managing emotional expressions with others as part of one's professional work role (Penn State, 2024). It is characterized by two main regulation strategies: surface-acting and deep-acting (Lu et al., 2019). Surface acting occurs when employees display emotions required for a job without changing what they feel, and deep acting refers to modifying internal feelings to be consistent with the display rules of the profession (Yang et al., 2019). A teacher must project enthusiasm, support, and happiness to the students, even under challenging circumstances, as they are expected to display positive emotions while teaching (Dreer, 2021; Keller et al., 2018). Too often, a teacher adheres to the display rules of the profession even when feeling sick, tired, irritated, or overwhelmed with his or her personal life to make the students feel comfortable in class (Zhang & Zhang, 2024; Eva, 2022). Teachers are expected to adjust their teaching style so that the students can learn better.

Compassion fatigue can be experienced by teachers who need to show high empathy toward students. Teachers who are in schools that have high poverty incidences (Mason-Williams et al., 2022; Isenberg et al., 2021; DuBois & Mistretta, 2012) and those who handle students with disabilities can develop compassion fatigue (Darawsheh et al., 2023; Vučinić et al., 2020; Tuchinda, 2020). Compassion fatigue is a form of emotional and physical exhaustion that can arise from the chronic stress of caring for others, especially in helping professions like teaching (Yang et al., 2023; Bardach et al., 2022; Smith, 2021). As a developing country, public schools in the Philippines can have students coming from slum areas or those in poverty-stricken areas (ChildHope Philippines, 2023). Some students come to school without eating their meals or those without school materials (Basilio, 2024; Hartigan-Go et al., 2024). Given this situation, some teachers support students by giving them food or school supplies. In the process, they share their meager earnings with their students who are in need. For teachers of students with disabilities, they must constantly address the wide range of physical, emotional, behavioral, and intellectual challenges of their

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