


Chapter 12

Silent Struggles: Emotional Labor, Burnout, and Quiet Quitting Among Filipino Faculty

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the emotional labor of Filipino tertiary faculty members and its role in triggering burnout and quiet quitting. Teachers often mask emotions and perform beyond formal roles due to cultural expectations. Prolonged exposure to stress, institutional demands, and emotional dissonance leads to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Burnout fosters disengagement and eventually quiet quitting—a self-preserving response rather than neglect. The chapter emphasizes the urgent need for health and safety policies, institutional support, and cultural sensitivity to protect educators’ well-being. It offers insights for stakeholders committed to sustaining a healthy academic workforce.

INTRODUCTION

Emotional labor in education is often either unnoticed or underestimated. However, managing relationships with colleagues, students, and parents can be emotionally taxing for tertiary-level faculty (Smith, 2019). Creating a positive classroom atmosphere can be challenging, especially when teachers

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must address student misbehavior while also managing their own negative emotions (Chang & Taxer, 2021). This role requires both surface acting—masking true feelings—and deep acting to fulfill the profession's demands (Ngcobo et al., 2022).

Faculty members' work stressors contribute significantly to burnout. Burnout among Filipino faculty at the tertiary level is a complex issue defined by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of achievement (Varias & Conway, 2024). These difficulties are heightened by specific stressors within Philippine higher education, including chronic resource shortages, excessive workloads, and expectations to balance teaching, research, and administrative tasks (Fadare et al., 2023). Faculty often confront substantial professional and institutional demands that test their limits, leaving minimal space for personal wellness. Cultural values such as *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude) and *pakikisama* (harmony and solidarity), although well-intentioned, further lead to over-commitment (Nunez, 2024). Many faculty members feel pressured to exceed their responsibilities, even at the cost of their health (Hammoudi Halat et al., 2023; Nguyen, 2023). This cultural context, combined with the absence of clear professional boundaries, increases stress and creates favorable conditions for burnout, ultimately impacting educators' quality of life and the academic atmosphere they foster (Faugnillan & Paglinawan, 2024). Faculty members are also expected to fulfill their responsibilities and follow directives, often extending beyond regular work hours (Bogler & Somech, 2023).

Consequently, quiet quitting can occur. Among Filipino faculty, this phenomenon often arises as a response to burnout, where ongoing emotional and physical fatigue results in disengagement from their work (Varias & Conway, 2024). Faculty may adopt a minimum-effort mindset, or at times, a best-effort approach, by fulfilling only their essential duties and withdrawing from non-mandatory tasks or initiatives (De Sisto, 2025). This behavior is not inherently due to laziness but rather a form of self-preservation, as they attempt to safeguard their well-being amidst overwhelming demands (Formica & Sfodera, 2022). Additionally, some faculty members become disengaged from their responsibilities, especially those nearing retirement (Greenberg et al., 2023; Chaichian, 2021). A key factor contributing to quiet quitting is the disconnect between family values and institutional priorities (Pevec, 2023). In Filipino culture, family is of utmost importance, yet the relentless demands of academia often compel faculty to forgo personal time and relationships (Ryan, 2021). Filipino faculty members who are mothers frequently find themselves needing to address faculty duties even while at home, thereby sacrificing precious time with their children and family (Rivera & Martin, 2025). Over time, this can lead faculty members to become emotionally and intellectually disengaged, resulting in a quiet but significant shift in the academic landscape.

Given the challenges presented by emotional labor, burnout, and quiet quitting, implementing appropriate programs is essential. The Philippine Labor Code (Malacanang Palace, 1974) specifies that there are “mandatory occupational safety and health standards to eliminate or reduce occupational safety and health hazards in all workplaces and institute new and update existing programs to ensure safe and healthful working conditions in all places of employment” (Chapter 2, Article 162, of the Philippine Labor Code). Furthermore, Republic Act 11058 (An Act Strengthening Compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Standards and Providing Penalty for Violations Thereof) asserts that a safe and healthy workforce is crucial for nation-building. It also states that every worker must contribute to ensuring compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Standards in the workplace.

The Joint Memorandum on Occupational Safety and Health Standards of the Civil Service Commission, Department of Health, and the Department of Labor and Employment stipulates that there must be a Safety and Health Committee in government agencies. This committee is required to plan and develop

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