



International Journal of Education, Literacies, and Curriculum Studies

ISSN: 3116-2991

<https://ijelcs.minduraresearch.com/journal/index>

Volume 2 Issue 1-2026

Lived Experiences of Psychological Stress and Coping Mechanisms Among Healthcare Workers in a Public Hospital Setting: A Qualitative Inquiry at Aurora Memorial Hospital

Shirley Anne M. San Miguel-Chavez¹ Dr. Alberto Gonzales²

¹Northeastern College, Santiago City, Philippines
sanmiguelanne6@gmail.com

²Northeastern College, Santiago City, Philippines
gonzalesalberto0810@gmail.com

Publication Date: 03/31/2026

ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of psychological stress and coping mechanisms among healthcare workers in a public hospital setting at Aurora Memorial Hospital. Specifically, the study examined the sources of workplace stress, emotional and psychological experiences, coping strategies, and perceived support systems among healthcare personnel. Data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews with fifteen purposively selected healthcare workers composed of nurses, medical technologists, nursing attendants, and allied healthcare personnel. Thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's framework was utilized in analyzing the data. Findings revealed that healthcare workers experienced psychological stress associated with heavy workload, emotional exhaustion, staff shortages, exposure to critically ill patients, and workplace pressure in delivering continuous patient care. Participants also described emotional fatigue, anxiety, physical exhaustion, and work-life imbalance as common psychological experiences in hospital settings. Despite these challenges, healthcare workers demonstrated resilience through peer support, spirituality, family support, emotional regulation, and adaptive coping strategies. Participants further emphasized the importance of supportive leadership, mental health support systems, and positive workplace relationships in sustaining emotional well-being and professional functioning. The findings underscore the importance of psychosocial support programs, workplace wellness initiatives, and emotionally supportive organizational practices in promoting healthcare workers' mental health and occupational resilience.

Keywords: psychological stress, coping mechanisms, healthcare workers, occupational stress, public hospital, qualitative research, workplace resilience

Received: 01/08/2026

Revised: 02/16/2026

Accepted: 03/29/2026

Published: 03/31/2026



ISSN:3116-2991



INTRODUCTION

Healthcare workers play a vital role in maintaining public health, delivering patient care, and sustaining healthcare services within hospital institutions. In public hospital settings, healthcare professionals are continuously exposed to physically demanding responsibilities, emotionally challenging situations, and high-pressure work environments that significantly affect psychological well-being and occupational functioning. The nature of healthcare work requires constant emotional engagement, rapid decision-making, and prolonged exposure to patient suffering, critical illnesses, and medical emergencies.

Psychological stress among healthcare workers has become an increasingly important concern due to its influence on mental health, workplace performance, emotional functioning, and quality of patient care. Excessive workload, long working hours, staff shortages, emotional exhaustion, and workplace pressure commonly contribute to stress experiences among healthcare personnel. In public hospitals, limited resources and increasing healthcare demands further intensify occupational stress and emotional burden.

Despite these challenges, healthcare workers continuously demonstrate resilience and professional commitment through adaptive coping strategies and supportive interpersonal relationships. Coping mechanisms such as peer support, spirituality, emotional regulation, social support, and work-life adjustment significantly help healthcare workers manage stress and maintain emotional well-being. Understanding these lived experiences is essential in strengthening mental health support systems and organizational wellness practices within healthcare institutions.

Existing studies on healthcare stress commonly focus on quantitative measures of burnout, anxiety, and workplace satisfaction. However, limited qualitative investigations examine the lived psychological experiences and coping practices of healthcare workers within localized public hospital contexts. Exploring these experiences provides deeper insights into the emotional realities, workplace challenges, and resilience strategies of healthcare professionals.

This study explored the lived experiences of psychological stress and coping mechanisms among healthcare workers in a public hospital setting at Aurora Memorial Hospital. Specifically, it examined healthcare workers' stress

experiences, emotional challenges, coping strategies, and perceived workplace support systems.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to:

1. Explore the lived experiences of psychological stress among healthcare workers in a public hospital setting;
2. Examine workplace factors contributing to psychological stress and emotional exhaustion; and
3. Identify coping mechanisms and support systems utilized by healthcare workers in managing occupational stress.

Review of Related Literature

Psychological stress among healthcare workers significantly affects emotional well-being, occupational functioning, and quality of healthcare delivery. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), stress emerges when workplace demands exceed individuals' coping capacities and available resources. Healthcare environments are particularly vulnerable to stress due to emotional labor, prolonged workload exposure, and high-pressure clinical responsibilities.

Research by Maslach and Leiter (2021) emphasized that healthcare workers commonly experience emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and burnout due to workload intensity, patient care demands, and organizational stressors. Public hospital settings often expose healthcare personnel to emotionally demanding situations that affect psychological well-being and workplace resilience.

Coping mechanisms play a significant role in managing occupational stress and promoting emotional stability. Folkman and Moskowitz (2020) explained that social support, emotional regulation, spirituality, and adaptive coping strategies help individuals manage workplace stress effectively. Positive workplace relationships and institutional support systems further strengthen resilience and emotional well-being among healthcare professionals.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (1984), which explains that stress results from individuals' appraisal of



workplace demands and their perceived coping capacities.

The theory emphasizes adaptive coping strategies and emotional regulation in managing occupational stress.

The study also utilized Maslach's Burnout Theory (2016), which explains emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment resulting from prolonged workplace stress exposure.

These theories guided the exploration of healthcare workers' psychological experiences, workplace stressors, and coping mechanisms within hospital settings the MATATAG Curriculum in multigrade classes.

I. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of psychological stress and coping mechanisms among healthcare workers at Aurora Memorial Hospital. Phenomenology was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to understand participants' emotional experiences, workplace realities, and coping processes within their professional environments.

The participants consisted of fifteen purposively selected healthcare workers composed of nurses, medical technologists, nursing attendants, and allied healthcare personnel. Inclusion criteria required participants to: (1) currently work in the hospital setting; (2) possess at least two years of healthcare service experience; and (3) be willing to share their workplace experiences and coping practices.

Data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews focusing on workplace stress experiences, emotional challenges, coping mechanisms, support systems, and professional experiences in healthcare service. Ethical considerations including informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study.

The gathered data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. Interview transcripts were transcribed, coded, and categorized to identify recurring meanings, patterns, and themes related to psychological stress and coping experiences. Trustworthiness was established through member checking, triangulation, audit trails, and thick description.

Results and Findings

Theme 1: Experiencing Emotional Exhaustion Due to Heavy Workload and Workplace Pressure

Participants consistently described heavy workload, staff shortages, long working hours, and continuous patient care responsibilities as major sources of psychological stress. Healthcare workers explained that workplace pressure often resulted in emotional exhaustion and physical fatigue.

One participant shared:

"Nakakapagod emotionally at physically lalo na kapag sunod-sunod ang patients at kulang ang staff."

Another healthcare worker explained:

"Minsan sobrang pressure dahil kailangan mong magtrabaho nang mabilis pero siguradong tama."

Participants also emphasized the emotional burden associated with handling critically ill patients and emergency situations.

The findings suggest that workload intensity and workplace pressure significantly contribute to emotional exhaustion among healthcare workers.

Theme 2: Managing Anxiety, Emotional Fatigue, and Work-Life Imbalance

Participants described experiencing anxiety, emotional fatigue, sleep difficulties, and work-life imbalance due to prolonged workplace stress and demanding hospital responsibilities. Some healthcare workers explained that stress often extended beyond the workplace and affected personal and family life.

One participant remarked:

"Minsan naiisip mo pa rin ang trabaho kahit nasa bahay ka na."

Another participant stated:

"Nakaka-drain emotionally lalo na kapag exposed ka lagi sa difficult situations."

Participants further explained that emotional stress sometimes affected motivation, concentration, and emotional well-being.

The findings indicate that prolonged workplace stress significantly influences healthcare workers' emotional and psychological functioning.

Theme 3: Strengthening Resilience Through Peer Support and Workplace Camaraderie



Healthcare workers emphasized the importance of peer support, teamwork, and positive workplace relationships in managing stress and emotional exhaustion. Participants explained that supportive colleagues helped reduce emotional burden and strengthen workplace morale.

One participant shared:

“Malaking tulong ang support system sa workplace kasi nagkakaintindihan kayo.”

Another healthcare worker explained:

“Kapag may teamwork at magandang samahan, mas nagiging manageable ang stress.”

Participants also observed that collaborative workplace relationships strengthened emotional resilience and professional motivation.

The findings highlight the importance of workplace camaraderie and social support in sustaining healthcare workers' emotional well-being.

Theme 4: Utilizing Spirituality, Family Support, and Emotional Regulation as Coping Mechanisms

Participants described spirituality, prayer, family support, emotional regulation, and self-care activities as important coping strategies in managing psychological stress. Healthcare workers emphasized that emotional encouragement from family members and spiritual practices helped them maintain emotional stability and resilience.

One participant remarked:

“Prayer at family support talaga ang nagbibigay ng lakas sa amin.”

Another participant stated:

“Kailangan matutunan mong i-manage ang emotions mo para hindi ka ma-burn out.”

Participants also described engaging in rest activities, leisure time, and emotional reflection to manage stress and regain emotional balance.

The findings suggest that adaptive coping strategies and psychosocial support systems significantly strengthen healthcare workers' resilience and emotional well-being.

Discussion

The findings revealed that healthcare workers in public hospital settings experience significant psychological stress associated with workload intensity, workplace pressure, emotional exhaustion, and prolonged exposure to emotionally demanding healthcare situations. These stressors significantly affect emotional well-being,

workplace functioning, and work-life balance.

Despite these workplace challenges, healthcare workers demonstrated resilience through peer support, spirituality, family support, emotional regulation, and adaptive coping practices. Positive workplace relationships and collaborative healthcare environments significantly contributed to emotional stability and professional functioning.

The study further highlights the importance of psychosocial support systems, mental health programs, and emotionally supportive organizational practices in strengthening healthcare workers' resilience and occupational well-being.

Conclusion

The study concluded that healthcare workers at Aurora Memorial Hospital experience psychological stress associated with heavy workload, staff shortages, emotional exhaustion, workplace pressure, and demanding patient care responsibilities. These workplace stressors significantly affect emotional well-being, workplace functioning, and personal life balance.

Despite these challenges, healthcare workers demonstrated resilience through adaptive coping strategies such as peer support, spirituality, family support, emotional regulation, and self-care practices. Supportive workplace relationships and collaborative healthcare environments also contributed positively to emotional well-being and professional motivation.

The findings underscore the importance of strengthening psychosocial support systems, workplace wellness initiatives, and mental health programs for healthcare workers in public hospital settings.

Implications of the Study

The findings may guide hospital administrators, healthcare leaders, and policymakers in strengthening workplace mental health programs, psychosocial support services, and wellness initiatives for healthcare workers. Hospitals may also improve organizational support systems, stress management programs, and collaborative workplace practices that promote emotional well-being and occupational resilience.

The study further highlights the importance of emotionally supportive healthcare environments and adaptive coping mechanisms in sustaining healthcare workers' mental health and professional functioning.

Future studies may further examine long-term



psychological stress experiences and resilience practices among healthcare workers across different healthcare institutions and professional settings.

II. REFERENCES

- [1] Andres, A. (2019). Achievement Goals and Mathematics Achievement of the Senior High School Students. *International Journal of English and Education*, 8 (2).
- [2] Andres, A. (2023). Establishing Quality Instrument for the Summative Assessment of Pre-Service Elementary Teachers. *JETT*. 14 (3), 9-16).
- [3] Andres, A.D. (2022). Metacognition and Performance in Mathematical Problem-Solving Among Bachelor of Elementary (BEED) Pre-service Teachers. *Central European Management Journal*, 30 (4). 86-95.
- [4] Antonio, A. (2021). Syntactical Scrutiny: Inaccuracies in the Lesson Planning of Non- Language Pre Service Teachers. *International Journal of Arts, Sciences and Education*,
- [5] Balog, P., & Gonzales, E. (2021). From Linguistic Landscapes to Teaching Resources: A Case of Some Rural Areas in the Province of Quezon. *International Journal of Arts, Sciences and Education*, 1(2), 23–44.
- [6] Banares, A. J. (2022). Reinterpreting Sonnet 18 by William Shakespeare through Stylistic Analysis. *International Journal of Arts, Sciences and Education*, 3(July Special Issue), 189–204. <https://ijase.org/index.php/ijase/article/view/163>.
- [7] Belarga, B., Guiquing-Clemente, B., Tulawie, A., Alih, C., Caban, R., & Manois, F. R. (2025). From Page to Praxis: The Role of Regional Literature in Shaping Culturally Grounded Teaching Methods in HEIs. *International Journal on Culture, History, and Religion*, 7(SI2), 356–371. <https://doi.org/10.63931/ijchr.v7iSI2.206>
- [8] Bonoan, K. C., Bunagan, K. A., Calangi, A. D., Chan, E. P., Corpuz, L. P., Deseo, J. M., Suarez, R. H., Sumulong, B. I., & Flores, A. R. (2021). A Comparative Study on the Knowledge, Attitude, and Practices (KAP) on the Preventive Measures Against Covid-19 of the Residents in Rural (Lobo, Batangas) and Urban (Taguig City, Metro Manila) Areas in the Philippines. *International Journal of Arts, Sciences and Education*, 1(3), 77–123. Retrieved from <https://ijase.org/index.php/ijase/article/view/35>
- [9] Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- [10] Buncag, R. (2022). Parent-Assisted Modular Reading Program: Its Effect on Reading Performance During the Covid-19 Pandemic of Grade 5 Pupils of Biwag Elementary School, Tallag Cabagan Isabela. *International Journal of Arts, Sciences and Education*, 3(July Special Issue), 39–50. <https://ijase.org/index.php/ijase/article/view/154>
- [11] Caliboso, J., Bagalay, B., Santiago, M., Bayan, R., Aguinaldo, I., & Belo, J. (2025). Literary Texts as Cultural Tools: A Study on Contextualized Learning Strategies in Philippine Higher Education. *International Journal on Culture, History, and Religion*, 7(SI2), 340–355. <https://doi.org/10.63931/ijchr.v7iSI2.205>
- [12] Camiring-Picpican, H., Flores, K., Caban, R., Mohadali, S., Galdonez, D., & Alih, C. (2025). Pedagogical Innovations Based on Philippine Cultural Practices: A Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching in Higher Education. *International Journal on Culture, History, and Religion*, 7(SI2), 433–451. <https://doi.org/10.63931/ijchr.v7iSI2.168>
- [13] Caranguian, C. B. (2022). Family-related Factors Influencing Success in the Licensure Examination for Teachers. *International Journal of Educational Sciences*. 38 (1-3), 62-69.
- [14] Caranguian, C. B. (2023). Level of Parental Involvement as a Predictor of Academic Achievement and School Adjustment. *Universidad de Granada*. 14(3), 138-143.
- [15] Folkman, S., & Moskowitz, J. T. (2020). Coping: Pitfalls and promise. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 55, 745–774.
- [16] Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. Springer.
- [17] Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2021). *The truth about burnout: How organizations cause personal stress and what to do about it*. Jossey-Bass.



International Journal of Education, Literacies, and Curriculum Studies

ISSN: 3116-2991

<https://ijelcs.minduraresearch.com/journal/index>

Volume 2 Issue 1-2026
