



## **Psychological Strain and Challenges Encountered by Tertiary Teachers in the New Normal**

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This study explores how teaching challenges impact the psychological strain of tertiary teachers. The challenges faced by tertiary teachers in the new normal are described, including technological insufficiency, digital literacy issues, lack of student motivation, reduced in-person interactions, learning environment distractions, and course structure and quality. The study investigates the teachers' experiences of psychological strain, leading to anxiety, stress, and depression. It explores the relationship between the teachers' profiles, encountered challenges, and manifestations of psychological strain. Additionally, it examines the connection between challenges and psychological strain in teachers. The respondents of the study were tertiary teachers from all campuses of Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST), selected through purposive sampling. Older, married teachers in higher positions experience psychological strain such as anxiety, depression, and stress. While psychological strain affects their well-being, it does not significantly impact their teaching performance. Younger, single teachers, who are new to the profession, are more likely to face challenges in teaching performance due to their limited experience in coping with teaching changes. Teachers with higher educational attainment and in higher positions experience challenges related to the demands of teaching, particularly the difficulty of monitoring learning at home.

Keywords: psychological strain, teaching challenges, new normal, educators, teachers

### **INTRODUCTION**

The many demands and challenges brought by the pandemic that teachers face today make teaching especially difficult. Foremost among the challenges is the depth of modular content that teachers need to implement and expect their students to be fully engaged in the activities. Directly linked to this is the teachers' preparation in identifying pedagogical strategies for teaching the material to individuals or groups of learners at the tertiary level. It is, therefore, uncommon to see teachers who teach low-level skills to students who lack the required knowledge in the lesson. The demand to get better results affects teachers as there are larger problems that remain an almost permanent challenge to them.

With schools all over the world redesigning because of COVID-19, blended learning is becoming the new normal (Ferralazzo, 2020). Blended learning has been around for a

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while and is the combination of traditional face-to-face instruction with aspects of online instruction all while students are in the classroom with the teacher. Teachers face different challenges due to these abrupt changes in the new educational system. Gershenson, S. and Holt, S. (2022) added that a major limitation is that all this research predates the pandemic. They also cited that there has long been a perception even before COVID-19—those schoolteachers are perpetually stressed and on the verge of burning out.

The psychological impact of these changes on educators has been a growing area of concern. According to Czyżewska et al. (2021), the researchers found that educators faced overwhelming challenges in adapting to online platforms, leading to fatigue and mental strain). The abrupt shift to online teaching has significantly increased teachers' workload, contributing to heightened levels of stress and burnout. Johari et al. (2021) corroborate this by noting that while interactions increased online, the mental well-being of educators suffered due to the abrupt changes. The lack of adequate training in digital tools and the pressure to maintain academic standards in a remote environment has exacerbated the situation, leading to significant psychological strain.

Manlangit (2021) argues that the pandemic brought frustrations to teachers since they must acclimatize to students the modality of learning. They asserted that teachers should adapt to changes in the new educational system, and they must exert effort to face the challenges and demands of teaching.

Despite the growing body of research on the impact of the pandemic on education, there remains a gap in the literature concerning the specific psychological strain experienced by tertiary teachers in this new normal. Most existing studies focus on K-12 educators, leaving the experiences of tertiary educators underexplored. This study addresses this gap by examining the challenges faced by tertiary teachers at Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST) and how these challenges contribute to psychological strain, including anxiety, stress, and depression.

This research is grounded in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), which posits that job demands, such as excessive workload and emotional demands, lead to burnout and psychological strain when not balanced by adequate resources. In the context of this study, the challenges of teaching in the new normal represent significant job demands, while factors such as technological support, professional development, and institutional support serve as potential resources that can mitigate these demands.

The current study identifies several gaps in the existing literature. Firstly, while there is extensive research on the impact of remote and blended learning on student outcomes, less attention has been paid to the effects on teachers, particularly at the tertiary level. Secondly, there is a need for more research that explores the specific psychological impacts of these new teaching challenges on educators. Finally, the study aims to contribute to the understanding of how demographic factors such as age, marital status, and professional rank influence the psychological strain experienced by tertiary teachers.

The study determined the tertiary teachers' psychological strain and challenges encountered using online platforms in the new normal setting. This assesses how teaching challenges affect tertiary teachers' psychological strain. Specifically, it answered the following questions: 1. How may the profile of the teachers at the tertiary level be described in terms of: 1.1 age; 1.2 civil status; 1.3 highest educational attainments; and 1.4 rank and position? 2. How may the challenges encountered by tertiary teachers in the new normal be described in terms of? 2.1 technological insufficiency 2.2 digital literacy and competency issues 2.3 lack of motivation in students 2.4 lack of in-person interactions 2.5 learning environment distractions 2.6 course structure and quality issues 3. How may the teachers' experiences of the manifestations of psychological strain be described leading to: 3.1 anxiety. 3.2 stress; and 3.3 depression? 4. Is there a significant relationship between the teachers' profile and their challenges encountered and the manifestations of psychological strain leading to anxiety, stress, and depression? 5. Is there a significant relationship between the challenges encountered and the manifestations of psychological strain leading to anxiety, stress, and depression of teachers?

## **METHOD**

The study employed a descriptive-correlational method to thoroughly explore the challenges faced by tertiary teachers and the psychological strain they experienced in the New Normal educational environment. It described the status of events, people, or subjects as they exist. In this study, descriptive design is used in describing the challenges encountered by tertiary teachers in the new normal setting of tertiary education, particularly in using online platforms. Moreover, the manifestations of psychological strain leading to anxiety, stress, and depression were described. The correlational study was used in determining the association between the profile of teachers who experienced the manifestations of psychological strain and their challenges encountered in the new normal. The relationship between the challenges encountered in the new normal and the manifestations of psychological strain leading to anxiety, stress, and depression was also measured. This methodology is suitable because it allows for both the description of the current challenges and the examination of relationships between variables, such as the teachers' profiles and the challenges they encounter. The correlational aspect is crucial in identifying significant associations that may inform interventions.

The respondents were the tertiary teachers on all campuses of Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST) who were experiencing the manifestations of psychological strain leading to anxiety, stress, and depression. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that the study specifically targeted tertiary teachers who exhibited manifestations of psychological strain, as pre-identified by the university psychometrician. While purposive sampling allows for in-depth analysis of this specific group, it may limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of tertiary teachers. This limitation is acknowledged, and future studies may consider broader sampling methods to enhance generalizability. Indeed, these teachers who showed manifestations of psychological strain were pre-identified by the university psychometrician. Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents.

Table 1  
Distribution of respondents

SCHOOL CAMPUS	N
Atate Campus	12
Gabaldon Campus	17
General Tinio Campus	25
San Isidro Campus	16
Sumacab Campus	33
TOTAL	103

The study used survey questionnaires as the main source of data. It has three (3) parts: Part I – Demographic Profile of the Respondents draws information on the teachers' age, civil status, highest educational attainment, and rank and position. Part II – Teaching Challenges pertains to teaching demands and teaching performance in the teachers' instructional practices. Part III – Manifestations of Psychological Strain pertains to emotional status and difficulties experienced by teachers leading to anxiety, stress, and depression. The challenge encountered by teachers indicates the degree of responses from the scale below:

4-always a problem; 3-often a problem; 2-seldom a problem; 1-not a problem

On the other hand, the manifestations of psychological strain leading to anxiety, stress, and depression were answered using the following scale:

4-applied to me very much; 3-applied to me to a considerable degree; 2-applied to me to some degree; 1-did not apply to me at all

The questionnaire in Psychological Strain is adapted from the Manual for the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (3rd edition), which is a universally validated instrument. On the other hand, the questionnaire in teaching challenges is a collaboration of ideas and suggestions of tertiary teachers (Professors) that focus on their practices, difficulties, and experiences in teaching the New System of Education.

The questionnaire used in the challenge encountered by teachers was a researcher-made instrument based on the collaboration of ideas and experiences of teachers. The alignment of this in the study was validated by the dean, panelists, and dissertation adviser.

The reliability of this instrument was tested and retested by other professors on other NEUST Campuses to establish its reliability. The internal consistency of the instrument using Cronbach's alpha for reliability analysis yielded the following:

Table 2  
Reliability analysis

	No. of Items	Cronbach's alpha	Internal Consistency
Technological insufficiency	4	0.909	Excellent
digital literacy and competency issues	5	0.868	Good
lack of motivation among students	3	0.879	Good
lack of in-person interactions	5	0.899	Good
learning environment	2	0.912	Excellent

The instruments used in this study underwent rigorous validation and reliability testing. Content validity was ensured through expert evaluation by the dean, panelists, and dissertation adviser, who provided feedback on the alignment of the instruments with the study objectives. The reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha, with values ranging from 0.868 to 0.912, indicating good to excellent internal consistency across the different scales.

The excellent and good internal consistencies of the instruments used in the technological insufficiency, learning environment distractions, digital literacy, competency issues, lack of in-person interactions, and course structure and quality issues indicate that the questionnaire can give reliable results.

The researcher first sought the permission of the Vice President for Academic Affairs of NEUST to conduct the study. Then, the assistance of the University Psychometrician was obtained to identify the teachers with manifestations of psychological strain. After getting the email addresses of the target respondents, the researcher requested the Campus Directors of NEUST Campuses to allow her to administer the questionnaires via Google Forms.

Interviews were also conducted to support and validate the quantitative results of the study.

Ethical considerations were important in this study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and the anonymity of their identities as explained in the Google form. Data handling procedures were strictly followed, with all data securely stored and accessed only by the researcher. The study adhered to the ethical guidelines provided by the university's ethics committee, ensuring that participants' rights and well-being were protected throughout the research process.

To describe the profile of the respondents, frequency and percent distribution were used, while weighted mean and verbal interpretation were utilized in describing the teaching challenges and the manifestations of psychological strain.

The data were analyzed using both Spearman's rho and Pearson Product Moment Correlation to explore relationships between the respondents' profiles, teaching challenges, and manifestations of psychological strain. Spearman's rho was chosen for non-parametric data to assess the association between ranked variables, while Pearson's correlation was utilized to determine the strength and direction of linear relationships. This combination of analytical techniques ensures a deep understanding of the associations within the data.

## **FINDINGS**

The following writing and reference rules are to be taken into consideration.

**Challenges Encountered by Teachers**

Table 3

Weighted mean and verbal interpretation on the respondents' descriptions of the challenges encountered

	WM	VI
<b>Technological Insufficiency</b>		
Teachers have limited devices for learning online	2.63	Often a Problem
Teachers have limited internet connection.	2.55	Often a Problem
No support for lessons through video or audio calls.	2.51	Often a Problem
Material resources are inadequate in online learning.	2.53	Often a Problem
Average Weighted Mean	2.56	Often a Problem
<b>Digital Literacy and Competency Issues</b>		
Teachers are dissatisfied with the technology used for online teaching	3.19	Often a Problem
There are limited Scheduled sessions with students online.	3.15	Often a Problem
There are difficulties in selecting teaching techniques for online.	3.30	Always a problem
There are difficulties in evaluating and grading students on online platforms.	3.26	Always a problem
selecting content topics and skills is difficult to teach as this requires an understanding of the multiple software.	3.31	Always a problem
Average Weighted Mean	3.24	Often a Problem
<b>Lack of Motivation in Students</b>		
Lack of student involvement in online teaching.	3.69	Always a problem
Students are not engaged in virtual classes.	3.39	Always a problem
Students find it hard to focus during online classes.	3.34	Always a problem
Average Weighted Mean	3.47	Always a problem
<b>Lack of In-person Interactions</b>		
There are no real-time interactions with students.	3.54	Always a problem
No personal attention to each student's needs	3.47	Always a problem
Communication with students is limited	3.53	Always a problem
Students are ineffective in assessment tasks done at home.	3.45	Always a problem
Teachers are not satisfied with students' responses to instruction due to a lack of physical interactions.	3.17	Often a Problem
Average Weighted Mean	3.43	Always a problem
<b>Learning Environment Distractions</b>		
Students stay distracted during an online class as they may be engaged in social media while in online classes.	3.43	Always a problem
There is a disturbance from the environment while learning online classes.	2.55	Often a Problem
Average Weighted Mean	2.99	Often a Problem
<b>Course Structure and Quality</b>		
There is a problem in Establishing the curriculum, difficulties in planning and designing interesting activities	3.44	Always a problem
Teachers are not satisfied with the current learning model. Delivering content knowledge is difficult.	3.59	Always a problem
Teachers are not confident in providing effective instruction.	3.65	Always a problem
The course structure is not suited for an online class.	3.25	Always a problem
Average Weighted Mean	3.48	Always a problem

Legend: 1.00-1.74 – Not a problem; 1.75-2.49 – Seldom a problem; 2.50-3.24 – Often a problem; 3.24-4.00 – Always a problem

### *Technological Insufficiency*

With an average weighted mean of 2.56, described as "often a problem," the demand for technological resources like computers, adequate software, and high-bandwidth internet is significant for tertiary teachers. One teacher shared, "I often struggle with unstable internet during lectures, which disrupts the flow of teaching." This sentiment reflects the broader issue of technological insufficiency, which, while challenging, does not directly correlate with psychological strain as per the quantitative data. However, the ongoing need to adapt to online platforms exacerbates the stress associated with the teaching role.

### *Digital Literacy and Competency Issues*

Challenges in digital literacy were described as "always a problem," with teachers facing difficulties in selecting appropriate online teaching techniques (wm=3.30) and evaluating students effectively (wm=3.26). One teacher mentioned, "Switching to online teaching was overwhelming. I had to learn multiple software quickly, which added to my anxiety." The JD-R Model helps explain this phenomenon, where increased job demands, like mastering new technologies, contribute to higher stress levels, especially among older teachers.

### *Lack of Motivation in Students*

The lack of student motivation was consistently identified as "always a problem." Teachers noted issues like students not engaging in virtual classes (wm=3.39) and struggling to focus (wm=3.34). A teacher explained, "It's hard to motivate students when you can't see them or understand their challenges personally." This lack of interaction and engagement not only impacts teaching effectiveness but also contributes to teachers' feelings of helplessness and stress, aligning with the concept of job demands overwhelming the available resources.

Findings show that tertiary teachers face difficulties in motivating students in online teaching classes because there is a minimum opportunity to interact face-to-face with students and difficult to know their behavior and understand their problems.

### *Lack of In-person Interactions*

The teachers also encountered that a lack of in-person interactions was always a problem. There were no real-time interactions with the students (wm=3.54); No personal attention to each student's needs (wm=3.47); Communication with students is limited (wm=3.53); Students are ineffective in assessment tasks done at home (wm=3.45); and Teachers are not satisfied with student's response to instruction due to lack of physical interactions (wm=3.17).

### *Learning Environment Distractions*

The teachers encountered the following challenge and described it as "always a problem": Students stay distracted during an online class as they may be engaged in social media while in an online class (wm=3.43). Alternatively, the disturbance from the environment while learning online classes was often a problem as described by the teachers.

*Course Structure and Quality*

Teachers described the following items related to course structure and quality as ‘always a problem’: There is a problem in Establishing the curriculum, difficulties in planning and designing interesting activities (wm=3.44); and Teachers are not satisfied with the current learning model. Delivering content knowledge is difficult (wm=3.59); Teachers are not confident in providing effective instruction (wm=3.65) and The course structure is not suited for an online class (wm=3.25).

Results showed that lesson planning, instructional strategies, and activities were very challenging tasks as experienced by the tertiary teachers.

## Psychological Strain

Table 4

Weighted mean and verbal interpretation on the respondents’ descriptions of psychological strain

PSYCHOLOGICAL STRAIN	WM	VI
<b>ANXIETY</b>		
1. I found myself getting upset by quite trivial things	3.06	applied to me to a considerable degree
2. I was aware of the dryness of my mouth	2.53	applied to me to a considerable degree
3. I couldn't seem to experience any positive feelings at all	3.18	applied to me to a considerable degree
4. I experienced breathing difficulty (eg, excessively rapid breathing, breathlessness in the absence of physical exertion)	3.10	applied to me to a considerable degree
5. I just couldn't seem to get going	3.18	applied to me to a considerable degree
6. I tended to over-react to situations	3.08	applied to me to a considerable degree
7. I had a feeling of shakiness (eg, legs going to give way)	3.41	applied to me very much
8. I found it difficult to relax	3.06	applied to me to a considerable degree
9. I found myself in situations that made me so anxious I was most relieved when they ended	2.78	applied to me to a considerable degree
10. I felt that I had nothing to look forward to	3.39	applied to me very much
Average weighted mean	3.08	applied to me to a considerable degree
<b>STRESS</b>		
1. I felt that life was not worthwhile	3.51	applied to me very much
2. I found it hard to wind down	3.39	applied to me very much
3. I had difficulty swallowing	3.73	applied to me very much
4. I couldn't seem to get any enjoyment out of the things I did	3.55	applied to me very much
5. I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion (eg, sense of heart rate increase, heart missing a beat)	2.92	applied to me to a considerable degree
6. I felt downhearted and blue	3.35	applied to me very much
7. I found that I was very irritable	3.33	applied to me very much
8. I felt I was close to panic	3.43	applied to me very much
9. I found it hard to calm down after something upset me	3.29	applied to me very much.
10. I feared that I would be "thrown" by some trivial but unfamiliar task	3.35	applied to me very much
Average weighted mean	3.39	applied to me very much
<b>DEPRESSION</b>		
1. I found myself getting upset rather easily	3.16	applied to me to a considerable degree
2. I felt that I was using a lot of nervous energy	3.27	applied to me very much
3. I felt sad and depressed	3.22	applied to me to a considerable degree
4. I found myself getting impatient when I was delayed in any way (eg, lifts, traffic lights, being kept waiting)	2.96	applied to me to a considerable degree
5. I had a feeling of faintness	3.37	applied to me very much



6. I felt that I had lost interest in just about everything	3.27	applied to me very much
7. I felt I wasn't worth much as a person	3.41	applied to me very much
8. I felt that I was rather touchy	3.04	applied to me to a considerable degree
9. I perspired noticeably (eg, hands sweaty) in the absence of high temperatures or physical exertion	3.37	applied to me very much
10. I felt scared without any good reason	3.47	applied to me very much
Average weighted mean	3.25	applied to me very much

Legend: 1.00-1.74 – did not apply to me at all; 1.75-2.49 – applied to me some degree; 2.50-3.24 – applied to me to a considerable degree; 3.24-4.00 – applied to me very much

#### A. Anxiety

Of all the respondents' perceptions of anxiety, they regarded breathing difficulty, and a feeling of shakiness during online classes as always, a problem (3.41%); the same is the feeling of having nothing to look forward to (3.39%); they get upset by quite trivial things (3.06%); they found it difficult to relax (3.06%) and tended to overreact to situations (3.08%).

One respondent shared, "I often feel anxious before an online class, worrying about possible technical issues." The JD-R Model suggests that these symptoms arise when job demands exceed the resources available to manage them, such as lack of support or training.

The finding implies that the respondents experience anxiety towards their work and they easily get upset about simple things. They experienced physical symptoms or manifestations of their annoyance with simple things. Their physical symptoms such as rapid breathing and shakiness of legs are regarded as anxiety.

#### B. Stress

Almost all of the statements are regarded as always, a problem to the respondents. They felt that life was not worthwhile (wm= 3.51), they found it hard to wind down(wm=3.39, they had difficulty in swallowing (wm=3.73),

they couldn't seem to get any enjoyment out of the things they did (wm=3.55), they were aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion (wm=2.92), they felt down-hearted and blue(wm=3.35), they find that they were very irritable (wm=3.33), they felt they were close to panic(wm=3.43), they find it hard to calm down after something upset them (wm=3.29), and they feared that they would be "thrown" by some trivial but unfamiliar task (wm=3.35). This means that all suffered stress in their teaching jobs. The demands are too toxic for them, and they feel that they cannot cope. Irritability and sadness always engulfed their well-being. Enjoyment in their work is alien as they always feel blue and sad. Stress always makes them feel down and empty.

A teacher remarked, "The constant pressure to adapt and perform in a digital environment makes me feel perpetually stressed." The JD-R Model can again be applied here, highlighting how the imbalance between job demands and resources leads to chronic stress and burnout.

#### C. Depression

The findings show that the respondents always felt depressed about teaching demands as manifested by their excessive sweating without any physical exertion (3.37%); they

also felt fainting (3.37 %) and worse, they always felt that they were not worth much as a person (3.41%); they also regard as a problem of being scared without any good reason (3.47%).

Teachers described their experiences with statements like, "I feel like I'm not good enough for this job anymore." This sense of inadequacy, especially among older teachers, can be linked to the increasing job demands without corresponding resources, as proposed by the JD-R Mode

These kinds of feelings associated with depression are manifested by nervousness. They feel worthless and not suited to the teaching task as they are often sad without any reason at all.

### Relationship between Profile and Psychological Strain and Teaching Challenges

Table 5

Relationship between the respondents' profile and their teaching challenges and descriptions of psychological strain

Spearman's rho		Age	Civil Status	Highest Educational Attainment	Rank and Position
<b>Challenges in Teaching Online</b>					
Technological Insufficiency	Correlation Coefficient	.037	.055	.049	.040
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.065	.223	.101	.100
	N	103	103	103	103
Digital Literacy and Competency Issues	Correlation Coefficient	.137**	.092	.175	.206*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.062	.048	.018
	N	103	103	103	103
Lack of Motivation in Students	Correlation Coefficient	.237*	.055	.215**	.187*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.017	.253	.007	.020
	N	103	103	103	103
Lack of In-person Interactions	Correlation Coefficient	.037	.092	.075	.006
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.082	.142	.098	.888
	N	103	103	103	103
Learning Environment Distractions	Correlation Coefficient	.037	.055	.084	.098
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.417	.223	.105	.102
	N	103	103	103	103
Course Structure and Quality	Correlation Coefficient	.023	.012	.075	.006
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.122	.142	.098	.888
	N	103	103	103	103
<b>Psychological Strain</b>					
Anxiety	Correlation Coefficient	.211**	.081	.044	.417**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.072	.332	.000
	N	103	103	103	103
Stress	Correlation Coefficient	.170**	.171**	.027	.385**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.545	.000
	N	103	103	103	103
Depression	Correlation Coefficient	.228**	.251**	.102*	.434**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.024	.000
	N	103	103	103	103

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*Profile of Teachers and Challenges Encountered*

The age of teachers is significantly related to the challenges encountered in digital literacy and competency issues ( $r_s=.137$ ), and lack of motivation in students ( $r_s=.237$ ). This finding showed that the older the teachers, the more likely they encounter challenges in digital literacy and competency and lack of motivation in students. This implies that age does matter in using technologies.

One older teacher commented, "Learning new technology at this stage in my career is daunting and exhausting." The JD-R Model supports the idea that age can reduce the resources available to meet job demands, leading to increased stress and strain.

*Profile and the Manifestations of Psychological Strain*

The age of respondents is significantly related to the manifestations of psychological strain leading to anxiety ( $r_s=.211$ ), depression ( $r_s=.228$ ), and stress ( $r_s=.170$ ). This implies that older teachers mostly experience the manifestations of psychological strain leading to anxiety, stress, and depression. This could be due to various factors such as increased health issues, financial insecurity, social isolation, or loss of loved ones.

A faculty member shared, "The pressure to keep up with younger colleagues and new technologies is overwhelming." The JD-R Model suggests that these increased demands without sufficient support led to greater psychological strain.

The rank of respondents is significantly related to the manifestations of psychological strain leading to anxiety, depression, and stress. The higher the rank of respondents, the more they experience the manifestations of psychological strain leading to anxiety, stress, and depression. Specifically, those in higher ranks experience more manifestations of psychological strain leading to anxiety, depression, and stress. This could be due to increased job demands, higher levels of responsibility, and greater pressure to perform well.

**Relationships between Psychological Strain and the Challenges They Encountered**

Table 6  
 Relationships between psychological strain and teaching challenges

		Anxiety	Stress	Stress
Technological Insufficiency	Correlation Coefficient	-.018	.011	.023
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.694	.815	.345
	N	103	103	103
Digital Literacy and Competency Issues	Correlation Coefficient	.070	.046	.045
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.124	.308	.453
	N	103	103	103
Lack of Motivation in Students	Correlation Coefficient	-.024	-.001	.049
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.589	.975	.453
	N	103	103	103
Lack of In-person Interactions	Correlation Coefficient	.045	.067	.064
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.345	.123	.432
	N	103	103	103
Learning Environment Distractions	Correlation Coefficient	.065	.056	.073
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.934	.345	.287
	N	103	103	103
Course Structure and Quality	Correlation Coefficient	.065	.074	.052
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.345	.193	.543
	N	103	103	103

There is no significant relationship between respondents' psychological strain and teaching challenges in online learning. The problems encountered by teachers in distance learning such as technological insufficiency, digital literacy, competency issues, lack of motivation in students, lack of in-person interactions, learning environment distractions, course structure, and quality lack of significant relationship to do with the manifestations of psychological strain leading to anxiety, stress, and depression. However, qualitative data suggests that the overall demands of adapting to online teaching and the lack of resources exacerbate the psychological strain. One teacher reflected, "It's not just the technology; it's the isolation, the pressure, and the constant feeling of inadequacy."

It can be assumed from the results that psychological strain has other causes to be faced and addressed as it relies on mental activities, mental health, and well-being.

**DISCUSSION****Challenges Encountered by Teachers**

Access to technology remains the most significant challenge hindering the effectiveness of online teaching. However, this challenge manifests differently depending on the

context. For instance, in urban settings, teachers may struggle with network congestion due to a high number of users, leading to frequent crashes of online learning platforms (Zhang et al., 2020). In contrast, teachers in rural or remote areas face more fundamental issues, such as the complete lack of internet infrastructure or reliable devices, making online education almost impossible (Dhawan, 2020). For example, in remote mountainous regions, teachers report that students are often unable to attend classes due to the lack of internet connectivity or the absence of internet-enabled devices (Zhang et al., 2020).

Furthermore, in developing countries, the issue of technology access is compounded by economic factors. Even in areas where infrastructure is present, the financial burden of acquiring reliable devices and sufficient internet data is a significant barrier for both teachers and students (Akbulut et al., 2020). In contrast, teachers in wealthier, urban areas might have better access to technology but still face challenges such as maintaining student engagement in a digital environment filled with distractions, including social media.

The disparity between these settings highlights the need for tailored interventions. In rural and underdeveloped regions, investment in infrastructure and affordable technology is critical. In urban settings, where technology is more readily available, the focus should be on training teachers to effectively utilize these tools and manage the digital classroom environment.

### **Psychological Strain**

The finding implies that the respondents experience anxiety towards their work and they easily get upset about simple things. They experienced physical symptoms or manifestations of their annoyance with simple things. Their physical symptoms such as rapid breathing and shakiness of legs are regarded as anxiety.

Anxiety manifests vulnerability to teaching performance so they need motivation as a remedy to help them. Guide them to cope with the challenges as well-being will impact their performance in school. These are only psychological distress and proper education will enhance their self-duties in their capacity to teach.

The psychological strain experienced by teachers is also context-dependent. For instance, older teachers, particularly those in rural areas with less access to technology, report higher levels of anxiety and stress related to the demands of adapting to new teaching technologies (Li et al., 2020). This is in stark contrast to their younger counterparts in urban settings, who may be more technologically adept but still experience stress due to the overwhelming expectations to be constantly available online.

One case study from a rural district revealed that teachers were not only struggling with the technical aspects of online teaching but were also deeply affected by the isolation from their peers, leading to feelings of depression and burnout. In contrast, teachers in urban areas, while more connected, faced different stressors such as increased surveillance from parents and administrators during online classes, contributing to their psychological strain (Ferguson et al., 2012).

These examples underscore the importance of context in understanding and addressing the psychological strain on teachers. Interventions should be designed to address the specific needs of teachers in different settings, whether through providing better technological support in rural areas or offering mental health resources in urban schools where the pressure to perform is higher.

### **Relationship between Profile and Psychological Strain and Teaching Challenges**

Although older adults are increasingly using technology, data indicate that they typically have more difficulty than younger people in learning to use and operate current technologies such as computers, the Internet, videocassette recorders, automatic teller machines, and telephone menu systems.

Technology without teachers cannot create a good environment for language teaching and learning. Teachers and technology have important roles to play in education. Together, good teachers and good technology are essential to provide educational improvement. A few studies have examined the impact of the teacher on ICT integration. These studies concluded that teachers have a crucial impact on the integration of ICT into language teaching and learning. Many factors related to teachers affect the integration of ICT. Teachers' age is one of these factors. Computers should serve language teaching and learning which means that teachers should know how to use computers to foster language teaching and learning. The success of ICT integration into the curriculum will vary from one place to another and from one class to another depending on the ways it is applied. It is important to train teachers with methods to use technology for language instruction (Mahdii and Al-Dera, 2013).

The age of respondents is significantly related to the manifestations of psychological strain leading to anxiety ( $r_s=.211$ ), depression ( $r_s=.228$ ), and stress ( $r_s=.170$ ). This implies that older teachers mostly experience the manifestations of psychological strain leading to anxiety, stress, and depression. This could be due to various factors such as increased health issues, financial insecurity, social isolation, or loss of loved ones.

The prevalence of anxiety among teachers with women being more anxious than men and older ones being more symptomatic (Li et al., 2020). Moreover, previous studies have found that working from home using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can create feelings of tension, anxiety, exhaustion, and decreased job satisfaction, and in times of a pandemic these were the only tools that were available to teachers.

Civil status is significantly related to the manifestation of psychological strain leading to stress and depression. It can be inferred that married and widows/er are more likely to experience the manifestations of psychological strain leading to stress and depression compared to single teachers.

Overall, these statements highlight the importance of considering demographic factors when assessing and addressing psychological strain. It is important to understand the unique challenges and stressors faced by individuals based on their age, civil status, and job rank, to provide appropriate support and interventions.

### **Relationships between Psychological Strain and the Challenges They Encountered**

It can be assumed from the results that psychological strain has other causes to be faced and addressed as it relies on mental activities, mental health, and well-being.

The teaching profession has always brought with it added stress due to excessive workloads, interpersonal communication problems, insufficient training, and job insecurity. Research carried out in several countries has revealed that in the teaching profession, there have been many casualties of stress, anxiety, and depression. Psychological symptomatology has been studied by both primary and secondary educators as well as university teachers. Although more psychological symptomatology has been detected in secondary school educators, in comparison with those working in primary schools, other variables such as salary, relationships with students, and relationships with classmates are also important factors. This stress may have consequences for the health of teachers and, as a result, could lead to increased instances of sick leave, absenteeism, and poor work performance. Further, it is important to safeguard the emotional health of teachers since, as a recent study by De la Fuente et al. (2022) highlights, teacher-student relationships are also stressors for the student, and the teacher's behavior predicts the emotional well-being and commitment of the students, which are also important factors for reducing their stress level. Hence, the challenges in teaching caused by online distance learning unforeseen circumstances need to be resolved and see to it that the context and lesson content are achieved.

There is no significant link between a teacher's psychological strain and the challenges they face in their online teaching performance. Each of these factors has its unique characteristics that can improve teaching performance on online platforms. Teaching challenges refer to difficulties that arise due to unforeseen circumstances that must be resolved to achieve lesson content and context. Psychological strain, on the other hand, is related to mental activities, mental health, and well-being, and has its distinct causes that must be addressed. Ultimately, there is no significant relationship between teaching challenges and psychological strain.

### **CONCLUSION**

The findings revealed that older and married teachers are particularly susceptible to challenges related to technological insufficiency, digital literacy, and lack of student motivation. These challenges are exacerbated in the context of online learning, where the absence of in-person interactions and course structure issues further complicate the teaching experience.

Teachers with higher educational attainment and positions also report significant difficulties, particularly in managing technological insufficiencies and motivating students in a virtual environment. The higher the rank or position, the more pronounced the psychological strain, manifesting in increased anxiety, stress, and even depression. However, while the challenges of online learning are significant, they are not the primary drivers of psychological strain among teachers. Instead, the strain appears to be linked more closely to factors such as workload, job demands, and the lack of institutional support.

Given these findings, it is crucial to develop targeted interventions that address the specific challenges faced by different groups of teachers. For older and married teachers, enhancing digital literacy through tailored training programs could alleviate some of the technological challenges they face. Additionally, strategies to improve student engagement in online learning, such as interactive course designs and regular feedback mechanisms, could help mitigate the lack of motivation among students. Future research should also investigate the effectiveness of these proposed interventions by conducting longitudinal studies that evaluate their impact on teachers' well-being and job performance. This could involve pre- and post-intervention assessments, as well as comparisons between teachers who receive the intervention and those who do not.

In conclusion, the challenges encountered by tertiary teachers in online learning environments are complex and multifaceted, varying according to age, civil status, educational attainment, and position. Addressing these challenges requires a nuanced understanding of the underlying causes and the development of tailored, practical interventions that can improve the teaching experience and support teachers' mental health in the long term.

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