

TEACHERS' MENTAL HEALTH

by:

EDLYN A. FERMA

Teacher III, Hermosa National High School

Teaching is a demanding profession, and in the Philippines, educators face unique challenges that affect their mental health. Heavy workloads, large class sizes, administrative responsibilities, and personal struggles often lead to stress, burnout, and fatigue. Recognizing the critical role teachers play in shaping the future, the Department of Education (DepEd) and schools have implemented various programs to address teachers' mental health and ensure their well-being.

One significant initiative is the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS) offered by DepEd. These services aim to provide immediate support to teachers experiencing stress or emotional challenges. Activities such as stress debriefing, counseling sessions, and wellness webinars equip teachers with coping mechanisms to manage the demands of their profession. Additionally, schools organize regular wellness breaks where teachers can engage in relaxation activities like yoga, meditation, or team-building exercises.

Schools also promote mental health through Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions. These sessions serve as a professional development platform where teachers collaboratively address challenges and share best practices. LAC sessions now incorporate topics on mental health awareness and self-care, empowering educators to identify signs of stress and take proactive steps to protect their well-being. By creating a culture of peer support, these sessions provide a safe space for teachers to discuss their struggles and find solutions together.

Another key program is the provision of Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) that include access to mental health professionals, hotlines, and helplines. Some schools partner with local government units (LGUs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to offer free or subsidized psychological services. Additionally, schools encourage work-life balance by implementing policies that minimize excessive workloads and promote reasonable deadlines for administrative tasks.

While these initiatives have made progress in addressing teachers' mental health needs, more can be done. Increasing the number of mental health professionals in schools and improving access to services are essential. Building a supportive school culture that prioritizes teacher well-being and recognizes their efforts through incentives and recognition programs can also boost morale. By ensuring the mental health of teachers is well cared for, schools can create an environment where educators are inspired to give their best and learners can thrive under their guidance.

References:

Department of Education. (2023). Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS). Retrieved from <https://www.deped.gov.ph>

Republic Act No. 11036: Mental Health Act. (2018). Retrieved from <https://lawphil.net>

World Health Organization (WHO). (2020). Mental Health in the Workplace: Educators. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int>