RESEARCH NOTE

COVID-19 Impact on the Quality of Life of Teachers: A Cross-sectional Study

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The COVID-19 global health crisis has affected the mental and psychological health and well-being of the people around the world. However, little is known about the impact of COVID-19 among Filipino teachers. This study was conducted to determine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the quality of life (QoL) of professional teachers in the Philippines. A descriptive cross-sectional study was used involving 139 licensed professional teachers. The COVID-19 Impact on Quality of Life (COV19-QoL) was the primary measure used in this study. Descriptive statistics, t-test, and one-way ANOVA were the statistical tools employed to analyze the data. Results indicated a moderate COVID-19 impact on the QoL of the teachers. There was a significant difference in the impact of COVID-19 on QoL by degree program. However, the impact of COVID-19 on QoL did not significantly differ by age, sex, marital status, employment status, monthly salary, presence of a COVID-19 case near their residence, personal knowledge of someone who was infected or died of COVID-19, presence of a medical condition, and perceived threat. The psychological well-being and QoL of teachers must be recognized and teachers must be provided with support as they continue to adapt to the impact brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. This study contributes to the growing literature on the impact of the pandemic.

COVID-19 is a new viral infection that was declared as a public health emergency of international concern in January 2020 (AlAteeq et al., 2020). Globally, as of September 11, 2020, there have been 28,040,853 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 906,092 deaths, reported to the World Health Organization (2020). In the Philippines, the cumulative number of confirmed cases reported to the Philippine Department of Health (2020) has reached 252,964 cases. The Philippines has been one of the countries in Asia most impacted by the prolonged and widespread transmission of the coronavirus. As of this writing, the Philippines has the largest number of COVID-19 cases

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in Southeast Asia and surpassed Indonesia for the most reported cases in Southeast Asia on August 6, 2020 (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2020; Ranada, 2020).

The Philippines has been severely affected by the COVID-19 public health disaster. Apart from the employment sector that was significantly affected by the crisis (Bautista et al., 2020), the pandemic also resulted in unprecedented challenges in education (Moralista & Oducado, 2020). Countries around the world scrambled to prepare for the health, economic, and educational challenges of containing the highly transmissible virus. Despite the aggressive interventions of the Philippine government to stop the further transmission of the disease, cases of COVID-19 in the country are still growing (Moralista & Oducado, 2020). The closure of schools and social isolation implemented globally can result in sudden anxiety among teachers (Talidong & Toquero, 2020). Teachers are transitioning through an uncertain period in terms of their professional (Allen et al., 2020) and personal lives. Apart from the obvious risks to physical health, the psychological impact of COVID-19 also carries significant threats and dangers to mental health and well-being as higher levels of anxiety and stress are further exacerbated by the on-going uncertainty of the situation. Moreover, aside from the conceivable stresses teachers face regarding the threat of COVID-19 to themselves and their families, they are forced to transition into the new normal in the educational landscape and undertake effective remedial education (Guillasper et al., 2020; Moralista & Oducado, 2020). Teachers may not necessarily have the technologies, resources, and competencies that they need to engage and succeed in this new modality of teaching.

The impact on the mental health of other epidemics like SARS, MERS-CoV, H1N1, and Ebola has also been recorded (Zhang & Ma, 2020). The knowledge about COVID-19 is evolving and research regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health and quality of life (QoL) is growing. Some studies conducted on the impact of COVID-19 QoL involved patients with breast (Bargon et al., 2020) and ovarian cancer (Frey et al., 2020) and sarcomas (Younger et al., 2020). The immediate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health and QoL of the general local Chinese residents (Zhang & Ma, 2020), health and well-being of Moroccan adults not infected with COVID-19 after two months of quarantine (Samlani et al., 2020), and the QoL of people with no mental health-related diagnoses and those diagnosed with severe mental health disorders in European countries have also been investigated (Repišti et al., 2020).

Understanding how COVID-19 impacts the lives of the people in severely affected countries (Zhang & Ma, 2020), like the Philippines, is imperative. Despite the growing research on QoL, the literature about Filipinos is scarce among, particularly about professional teachers. This study was conducted to determine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on QoL primarily related to the mental health of licensed professional teachers in the Philippines.

Methodology

Study Design

This study employed a descriptive, cross-sectional research design. The participants of this study were the licensed professional Filipino teachers enrolled in the master's and doctoral program majoring in Educational Management at a government-funded college in the Philippines. A total of 140 participants were invited, 139 responded, for a response rate of 99%.

The online survey was conducted August 27-29, 2020. Administrative clearance to conduct the study was obtained from the Dean of the Graduate program. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study. The participants were reminded that proceeding with the survey grants their consent to voluntarily participate in the survey. Confidentiality of data and anonymity of participants were guaranteed throughout the study.

Survey Instrument

The COVID-19 Impact on Quality of Life (COV19-QoL) was the primary measure for this study and was utilized to capture the effect of COVID-19 on the main areas covering the QoL in relation to mental health (Repišti et al., 2020). The measure uses five-point Likert response options ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree), and participants were asked to reflect on their feelings and thoughts for each item on the scale during the past seven days. The tool had a good internal consistency of a Cronbach's $\alpha > .80$ for both clinical and non-clinical samples (Repišti et al., 2020). The COV19-QoL in this study had a Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$. Demographic profiles were also collected and participants were asked about their knowledge about the presence of a COVID-19 case near their residence, personal knowledge of someone infected with or who died of COVID-19, and the presence of a medical condition that increases their risk of severe COVID-19 illness. The six-item Perceived Coronavirus Threat Questionnaire (PCTQ) was also used to assess COVID-19 threat-related thoughts and worries (Conway et al., 2020). The participants were asked to respond in five-point Likert response options ranging from 1 (not true of me at all) to 5 (very true of me). The PCTQ had a reported Cronbach's $\alpha = .84$ (Nikčević & Spada, 2020). The internal consistency of the PCTQ in the current study was computed at $\alpha = .79$. The following scale of means was used to interpret that data: low = 1.00-2.33; moderate = 2.34-3.66; and high = 3.67-5.00.

Statistical Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, Independent Sample t Test, and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were employed to analyze the data with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. A normality test was performed on the dependent variable and suggested that data do not significantly deviate from a normal distribution. When p-values were less than .05, the differences were considered statistically significant.

Results

Characteristics of Participants

[Table 1](#) shows that the average age of the participants was 34.66 (SD = 9.29) years. The majority were females (84.9%), married (59.7%), enrolled in the master's program (79.9%), permanently employed (95%), with a monthly salary of between 20,000-29,999 Philippine pesos (PHP) (approximately 400-600USD) (80.6%). A little over half (55.4%) reported a COVID-19 case near their residence, although the majority did not personally know someone who was infected (72.7%) or had died (92.1%) of COVID-19. There were some (12.2%) who reported having medical conditions that increase their risk of severe COVID-19 complications, such as hypertension and asthma. Additionally, teachers reported a moderate (46%) or high (46.8%) perceived COVID-19 threat.

COVID-19 Impact on QoL

[Table 2](#) shows that generally, COVID-19 impacted the QoL of teachers to a moderate extent (M = 2.75; SD = .92). COVID-19 had the highest impact on their personal safety (M = 3.60; SD = 1.09) and least on their mental health (M = 2.08; SD = 1.15).

Differences in the Impact of COVID-19 on QoL

[Table 3](#) shows a significant difference (t = -2.592; p = .011) in the impact of COVID-19 when grouped by degree program. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was significantly higher among teachers enrolled in the master's program (M = 2.84; SD = 0.89) than those enrolled in the doctoral program (M = 2.35; SD = 0.95). However, impact of COVID-19 concerning mental health did not significantly differ according to age (F = .174; p = .841), sex (t = 1.718; p = .088), marital status (t = -.778; p = .438), employment status (t = .307; p = .760), monthly salary (F = -.131, p = .877), presence of COVID-19 case near their residence (F = .185; p = .688), personal knowledge of someone who was infected (t = 1.298; p = .196) or died (t = .720; p = .473) of COVID-19, presence of medical condition (t = -.430; p = .668) and perceived threat (F = 1.163; p = .316).

Discussion

This study looked into the impact of COVID-19 on the QoL of Filipino teachers. This study found that the mean composite score of teachers in the COV19-QoL scale was 2.75 for nearly six months since the Philippines implemented strict community quarantine across the archipelago. This finding, while slightly lower, is somewhat comparable to the non-clinical samples in Croatia where the mean was 2.91 (Repišti et al., 2020). Moreover, this study also suggests that the sample of teachers in this study perceived a greater impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their QoL as a whole compared to those in the European sample with pre-existing severe mental disorders (M = 2.40) (Repišti et al., 2020). Patients with cancer likewise experienced COVID-19 worry and deterioration in their emotional and social functioning

Table 1. Characteristics of Participants

Variables	f	%
Age (Mean = 34.66, SD = 9.29; Median = 33)		
30 and below	54	38.8
31 to 40	51	36.7
41 and above	34	24.5
Sex		
Male	21	15.1
Female	118	84.9
Marital status		
Single	56	40.3
Married	83	59.7
Degree program		
Doctoral	28	20.1
Masters	111	79.9
Employment status		
Permanent	132	95
Contractual/Part-Time/Unemployed	7	5.1
Monthly salary		
PHP Below 20,000 (below 400 USD)	15	10.8
PHP 20,000-29,999 (400 USD to < 600 USD)	112	80.6
PHP 30,000 and above (600 USD and above)	12	8.6
Presence of COVID-19 case near their residence		
Yes	36	25.9
No	77	55.4
Unsure	26	18.7
Personally know someone infected with COVID-19		
Yes	38	27.3
No	101	72.7
Personally know someone who died of COVID-19		
Yes	11	7.9
No	128	92.1
Presence of a medical condition		
Yes	17	12.2
Hypertension	8	
Asthma	5	
Diabetes	1	
Cardiomegaly	1	
Obesity	1	
Undergone 3 surgeries	1	
No	122	87.8
Perceived COVID-19 threat (M = 3.60; SD = .81)		
High	65	46.8
Moderate	64	46.0
Low	10	7.2

Table 2. COVID-19 Impact on QoL

Due to the spread of the Coronavirus	M	SD	Rank
I feel that my personal safety is at risk.	3.60	1.09	1
I think my quality of life is lower than before.	3.04	1.08	2
I feel more tense than before.	2.76	1.21	3
I think my physical health may deteriorate.	2.41	1.13	4
I feel more depressed than before.	2.37	1.31	5
I think my mental health has deteriorated.	2.08	1.15	6
COV19-QoL (total scale)	2.75	.92	

(Bargon et al., 2020; Frey et al., 2020; Younger et al., 2020). Correspondingly, a mild stressful immediate impact of COVID-19 was noted among local Chinese residents in Liaoning Province, mainland China (Zhang & Ma, 2020), and moderate disruption on QoL was noted among participants in Morocco (Samlani et al., 2020).

Moreover, the findings of this study also indicated that the greatest impact of the pandemic among teachers was on their personal safety followed by QoL in general whereas mental health was the least impacted. This is similar to the findings of Repišti and colleagues among their non-clinical samples wherein the greatest impact of the COVID-19 crisis was found on the QoL area in general and the least impact on the mental health aspect (Repišti et al., 2020). According to the authors, the least impact on the mental health could be explained by the assumption that because COVID-19 presents a looming and apparent risk to safety and physical health, people tend to concentrate more on their physical health at present (Repišti et al., 2020). It was earlier reported that Filipino teachers felt positive about spending more time with their families during the quarantine (Talidong & Toquero, 2020). Moreover, it could also be assumed that compared to the earlier parts of the lockdown, teachers may have developed coping strategies to deal with the mental stresses brought by the pandemic. Although the disease may still pose a moderate to high threat of transmission, may not any longer be regarded as a very severe illness compared to when knowledge about the pandemic was still developing or during the initial stages of the community quarantine. While the perception of the disease has a relevant role in the individual's psychological adjustment (Pérez-Fuentes et al., 2020), this study found no significant difference in the impact of COVID-19 on QoL based on perceived threat and between those with either knowledge of the presence or absence of any COVID-19 cases near their residence. Filipinos are known for their natural resilience and their ability to rise above the challenge in times of calamities and catastrophes. Protective factors identified in the literature include Filipino's strong faith and family ties, sense of humor, optimism, hopefulness, resourcefulness, and adaptability (Hechanova et al., 2015). On the other hand, a study on risk perception around the world disclosed that personal experience with the virus and hearing about the virus from friends and family significantly predicted risk perception

Table 3. Differences in the Impact of COVID-19 on QoL

Variables	M	SD	t statistics	p-value
Age			.174	.841
30 and below	2.74	.92		
31 to 40	2.70	.95		
41 and above	2.82	.90		
Sex			1.718	.088
Male	3.06	.99		
Female	2.69	.90		
Marital status			-.778	.438
Single	2.67	.93		
Married	2.80	.92		
Degree program			-2.592	.011*
Doctoral	2.35	.95		
Masters	2.84	.89		
Employment status			.307	.760
Permanent/Plantilla	2.75	.94		
Contractual/Part-Time/Unemployed	2.64	.66		
Monthly salary			-.131	.877
PHP Below 20,000 (below 400 USD)	2.64	.94		
PHP 20,000-29,999 (400 USD to < 600 USD)	2.75	.92		
PHP 30,000 and above (600 USD and above)	2.82	.95		
Presence of COVID-19 case near their residence			.185	.688
Yes	2.66	.90		
No	2.79	.90		
Unsure	2.74	1.04		
Personally know someone infected with COVID-19			1.298	.196
Yes	2.91	1.00		
No	2.69	.89		
Personally know someone who died of COVID-19			.720	.473
Yes	2.94	1.01		
No	2.73	.92		
Presence of a medical condition			-.430	.668
Yes	2.66	1.18		
No	2.76	.89		
Perceived COVID-19 threat			1.163	.316
High	2.62	.99		
Moderate	2.85	.85		
Low	2.88	.98		

(Dryhurst et al., 2020). Also, the perception of threat and risk from COVID-19 were found to influence negative mental states and emotions (Kim et al., 2020; Pérez-Fuentes et al., 2020).

It was also demonstrated in this study that teachers perceived a moderate to a high threat of COVID-19. Similarly, a little over half of the participants in a study conducted in China, despite not feeling helpless, felt horrified and apprehensive due to the pandemic (Zhang & Ma, 2020). This is an important consideration for policy-makers and educational planners in shifting to remote,

distance, flexible, blended, hybrid or other online learning approaches during the pandemic to provide, not only the students but the teachers as well, a sense of security from the danger of COVID-19. Amid the COVID-19 situation and to avoid face-to-face interactions, the Philippine Department of Education and Commission on Higher Education opted to adopt flexible, blended, modular, or online learning schemes or modalities in the delivery of instruction (Moralista & Oducado, 2020; Quinones, 2020).

Notably, teachers enrolled in the master's program posted a significantly greater impact of COVID-19 on their QoL as a whole compared to those enrolled in the doctoral program. Perhaps it can be assumed that teachers in the doctoral program were able to cope better than those in the master's program. Nonetheless, further research is still required to confirm this result of the study.

The findings of this research must be interpreted in light of the limitations of the present study. This study involves only professional teachers enrolled in the graduate program of one school in the Philippines and the survey was conducted at a particular point in time. The generalizability of findings cannot be guaranteed. Caution is warranted when interpreting and using the results of this study. Moreover, the findings of this research need to be verified by other studies involving a larger population that may also involve a qualitative component. A comparison of the QoL of teachers employed in public and private schools and in areas with high and low COVID-19 cases may also be performed. Since there are speculations that a greater impact on mental health could possibly be found in the aftermath of the pandemic (Repišti et al., 2020), additional research may be conducted in the future.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a far-reaching effect on the QoL of teachers. However, despite the moderate to high threat of COVID-19, teachers appear to have somehow coped with the impact of COVID-19 as indicated by the moderate impact on their QoL concerning mental health almost six months after the massive lockdown in the country. Nonetheless, the QoL of teachers along with their physical and mental well-being must also be continuously given attention. Teachers must also be provided with support as they continue to adapt to the impact brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. This study contributes to the growing literature on the impact of the pandemic which could serve as a baseline or reference for future studies.

Biographical Notes

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