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## Mental Health Challenges Among Filipino Special Education Teachers in Clark County, Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

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### Article Information

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the mental health and demographics of Filipino special education teachers in Clark County, Las Vegas. Using a cross-sectional design, data from 60 teachers were collected through a structured questionnaire, including the Mental Health Analysis by Thorpe and Clark. Findings reveal that many teachers have low levels of close relationships (61.67%) and social participation (65.00%), indicating social support and isolation issues. Logistic regression shows that male teachers and those aged 30-39 are more likely to have strong close relationships. The results highlight the need for tailored interventions to enhance social relationships and support systems, especially for female teachers and those outside the 30-39 age range.

### INTRODUCTION

The mental health of educators is a critical yet often overlooked aspect of the educational ecosystem. It influences not only the well-being of teachers but also the academic and emotional development of their students. Research underscores the interconnected well-being of educators and students, emphasizing the importance of addressing both (Falk, 2021; Goswami, 2024). Teachers are pivotal in identifying and supporting students' mental health needs (Venkataraman *et al.*, 2019), yet they frequently lack adequate training and support (Goswami, 2024). Teacher mental health significantly impacts student academic achievement (Vargas & Yepes, 2023) and overall school climate (Gray *et al.*, 2017).

Special education teachers face unique challenges due to the diverse and complex needs of their students. They manage significant physical and mental demands, handle excessive responsibilities, and overcome obstacles to self-fulfillment (Cuadra, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these difficulties, making the implementation of distance learning particularly stressful and leading to increased burnout (Paguirigan *et al.*, 2023). Additionally, teacher educators often feel unprepared to teach students with special educational needs in higher education, highlighting a gap in their training and support (Holmqvist *et al.*, 2019).

This study focuses on the mental health status of Filipino special education teachers in the Clark County District, Las Vegas, Nevada. These teachers face unique challenges when migrating to the United States, including cultural adjustment, professional isolation, and excessive paperwork (Bartlett, 2014; Brazas, 2023; Macapagong *et al.*, 2023). Despite these difficulties, Filipino teachers are often recruited to fill shortages in areas like special education due to their qualifications and experience (Bartlett, 2014). This study aims to shed

light on the mental health challenges faced by Filipino special education teachers in Clark County. By examining their mental health status and identifying key stressors, this research seeks to provide a basis for developing a psychological counseling program tailored to their specific needs. The goal is to enhance the well-being of these teachers, thereby improving their ability to provide high-quality education and support to their students.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Clark County District, one of the largest and most diverse school districts in the United States, employs a significant number of Filipino special education teachers (Delaney, 2017; Iasevoli, 2017; Porciuncula, 2019). These educators face not only the typical stressors associated with teaching but also the added complexities of working in a foreign country. Cultural adjustment, social isolation, and the pressures of maintaining high educational standards amidst limited resources significantly impact their mental health (Macapagong *et al.*, 2023).

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these challenges, leading to high rates of anxiety and depression among special education teachers (Cormier *et al.*, 2021). School leadership, climate, and professional isolation play crucial roles in influencing teachers' stress and coping profiles (Herman *et al.*, 2023). Despite these stressors, Filipino teachers have demonstrated resilience by relying on family support, recreational activities, and spiritual practices (Aruta *et al.*, 2021; Pekas *et al.*, 2022). However, unmanaged stress and depression can adversely affect classroom environments and hinder the development of learning resources (Jimenez, 2021; Orlanda-Ventayen & Ventayen, 2021).

Understanding the mental health status of Filipino special education teachers in Clark County is crucial. Firstly, it provides insight into their capacity to support

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students who require substantial emotional and educational assistance. Many teachers lack adequate mental health literacy and training to effectively address students' mental health needs (Satparam, 2023). Secondly, profiling these teachers' mental health highlights the need for targeted interventions that consider their unique cultural and professional contexts (Aziz & Mangestuti, 2023). This understanding is essential for developing a comprehensive psychological counseling program tailored to the specific needs of Filipino special education teachers in Clark County.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a cross-sectional design to assess the mental health status and demographic characteristics of 60 Filipino special education teachers in Clark County District, Las Vegas, Nevada. The sample was predominantly female (66.67%), with most participants in the 30-39 age range (41.67%). Data were collected through an electronically distributed structured questionnaire, which included both demographic questions and the Mental Health Analysis by Louis P. Thorpe and Willis W. Clark to measure various domains of mental health, such as close relationships, interpersonal skills, and emotional stability.

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic profile and mental health outcomes, while logistic regression analysis explored the influence of demographic factors on high close relationships. The study adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring participants' informed consent and confidentiality throughout the process. Statistical software was employed to ensure data accuracy and reliability.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings from the analysis of the demographic profile, mental health assets and liabilities, and the logistic regression analysis predicting the likelihood of high close relationships among Filipino special education teachers in the Clark County District, Las Vegas, Nevada. The results highlight key demographic characteristics, assess various domains of mental health, and identify significant demographic predictors of close relationships, providing a comprehensive understanding of the mental health status and influencing factors among these educators.

### Demographic Profile

The demographic profile of Filipino special education teachers in the Clark County District, Las Vegas, Nevada, reveals several key characteristics. The sample predominantly consists of female teachers (66.67%), with male teachers comprising 33.33% of the respondents. The age distribution shows that a significant portion of the teachers are aged 30-39 years (41.67%), followed by those aged 40-49 years (25.00%), 20-29 years (21.67%), and 50-59 years (11.67%). Regarding civil status, 60.00% of the respondents are single, 36.67% are married, and

3.33% are widowed.

In terms of the year level of SPED classes handled, 38.33% of the teachers work in middle schools, 33.33% in high schools, 16.67% in intermediate schools, and 11.67% in primary schools. The educational attainment of the respondents varies, with 33.33% holding a master's degree, 30.00% having a bachelor's degree, 23.33% currently pursuing a master's degree, and 13.33% possessing a doctoral degree. The length of service among these educators also shows diversity: 26.67% have served for 4 years or less, 21.67% for 10 to 14 years, 20.00% for 5 to 9 years, 18.33% for 15 to 19 years, and 13.33% for 20 years or more.

The demographic profile shows a predominance of female teachers, with the majority falling within the 30-39 age range. This age group represents a critical period in professional development where work-life balance and career advancement are often prioritized. The high proportion of single individuals among the respondents might reflect the mobility and career focus characteristic of younger professionals in education. Studies support this observation, indicating that single people, especially younger women, tend to be more mobile and career-focused (Merluzzi & Phillips, 2022; Wachter & Holz-Rau, 2021).

Higher career focus is associated with a greater likelihood of being voluntarily single, particularly for younger women (Apostolou & Patsiarika, 2022). Additionally, younger generations exhibit increased job and organizational mobility compared to older cohorts (Lyons *et al.*, 2015). The varied educational attainment levels indicate a commitment to professional growth, with many teachers pursuing advanced degrees, which is a positive sign for the continuous improvement of educational standards in special education. This is particularly important because highly qualified teachers positively impact students' educational attainment (Lee & Lee, 2020).

### Mental Health Assets and Liabilities

The mental health assets of the participants were assessed across several domains, including close relationships, interpersonal skills, social participation, satisfying work and recreation, and adequate outlook and goals. A significant portion of the teachers reported low levels of close personal relationships, with 61.67% indicating they had few close relationships, while 38.33% reported having strong close relationships. Interpersonal skills were similarly lacking for many, with 65.00% of teachers indicating low levels of these skills and only 35.00% reporting high levels. In terms of social participation, 65.00% of the teachers reported low levels of involvement in social activities, while 35.00% were more socially active. The domain of satisfying work and recreation had the highest percentage of teachers expressing dissatisfaction, with 75.00% indicating low satisfaction levels in their work and recreational activities, compared to 25.00% who felt satisfied. Lastly, adequate outlook and goals were reported as low by 70.00% of the teachers, while 30.00%

had a more positive outlook and clearer goals. The mental health liabilities of the participants were evaluated across several domains: behavioral immaturity, emotional instability, feelings of inadequacy, physical defects, and nervous manifestations. A substantial majority of the teachers (76.67%) reported low levels of behavioral immaturity, while 23.33% exhibited higher levels of immature behaviors. Most participants (70.00%) indicated low levels of emotional instability, whereas 30.00% experienced higher levels of emotional instability. The data showed that 73.33% of the teachers felt low levels of inadequacy, with 26.67% reporting significant feelings of inadequacy. In terms of physical defects, 55.00% of the teachers reported low levels, while 45.00% experienced higher levels of physical defects. The distribution was similar for nervous manifestations, with 56.67% indicating low levels and 43.33% reporting high levels of nervous manifestations.

The assessment of mental health assets and liabilities highlights several areas of concern and strength among the teachers. The significant proportion of teachers reporting low levels of close relationships and social participation suggests potential issues with social support and professional isolation. These factors are crucial as they can impact job satisfaction and overall well-being. Studies indicate that social support, particularly from supervisors, is associated with a reduced risk of burnout (Temam *et al.*, 2019). Conversely, professional isolation, indicated by

a lower proportion of special education teachers, is linked to maladaptive stress and coping profiles (Herman *et al.*, 2023). The high levels of dissatisfaction with work and recreational activities further underscore the need for better work-life balance and professional support systems. This finding is supported by Hester *et al.* (2020), who stated that many special education teachers feel overworked and unsupported, leading to stress and attrition.

On the positive side, the low levels of behavioral immaturity and emotional instability reported by the majority of teachers indicate a degree of resilience and professional maturity. However, the substantial minority experiencing higher levels of these liabilities points to the necessity of targeted mental health interventions. The mixed results regarding physical defects and nervous manifestations suggest that while some teachers are managing these challenges well, others may need more support to address these issues effectively.

### Predicting Mental Health Assets and Liabilities

A logistic regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of demographic factors on the likelihood of having high close relationships among Filipino special education teachers in Clark County. The analysis included predictors such as gender, age, civil status, year level of SPED class handled, educational attainment, and length of service.

**Table 1:** Demographic variables as predictors of mental health assets and liabilities

Predictor	$\beta$	SE	Wald $\chi^2$	p	Odds Ratio
Intercept	-2.543	0.845	9.034	.003	-
Gender (Male)	0.456	0.234	3.794	.051	1.577
Age (30-39)	0.689	0.298	5.344	.021	1.992
Age (40-49)	0.317	0.312	1.034	.309	1.373
Age (50-59)	-0.512	0.408	1.576	.209	0.599
Civil status (Married)	0.284	0.276	1.059	.304	1.329
Civil status (Widowed)	-0.134	0.612	0.048	.827	0.875
Year level handled (Intermediate)	0.112	0.398	0.079	.778	1.119
Year level handled (Middle)	-0.247	0.345	0.513	.474	0.781
Year level handled (High School)	0.389	0.317	1.504	.22	1.475
Educational attainment (MA/MS)	0.496	0.288	2.964	.085	1.642
Educational attainment (Doctorate)	0.235	0.378	0.387	.534	1.265
Length of service (5-9 years)	0.189	0.342	0.306	.58	1.208
Length of service (10-14 years)	0.32	0.358	0.8	.371	1.377
Length of service (15-19 years)	0.468	0.403	1.35	.245	1.597
Length of service (20+ years)	0.597	0.439	1.853	.173	1.816

The results indicated that gender and age were significant predictors of high close relationships. Specifically, male teachers were 1.577 times more likely to have high close relationships compared to female teachers, although this result was marginally significant ( $\beta = 0.456$ ,  $SE = 0.234$ ,  $Wald \chi^2 = 3.794$ ,  $p = .051$ ,  $OR = 1.577$ ). Age also showed a significant effect, with teachers aged 30-39 being 1.992 times more likely to have high close relationships

compared to those aged 20-29 ( $\beta = 0.689$ ,  $SE = 0.298$ ,  $Wald \chi^2 = 5.344$ ,  $p = .021$ ,  $OR = 1.992$ ). However, other age groups (40-49 and 50-59) did not show significant differences.

Male teachers and those in the 30-39 age group are more likely to report high levels of close relationships, highlighting specific demographic groups that might be benefiting from stronger social networks or coping

mechanisms. This finding suggests that interventions to enhance social relationships might need to be tailored differently for female teachers and those outside the 30-39 age range. Interestingly, these findings are contrary to previous research, which suggests that women tend to have higher levels of intimacy in relationships than men (Czyżowska *et al.*, 2019) and draw support from a wider range of sources, while men are more likely to rely on their partners (Liao *et al.*, 2016). Additionally, age-related changes in close relationships differ by gender, with young adult females terminating more opposite-gender relationships and older males being more persistent in maintaining declining relationships (Roy *et al.*, 2022). Other demographic variables, including civil status, year level of SPED class handled, educational attainment, and length of service, did not show significant relationships with the likelihood of having high close relationships. For instance, being married ( $\beta = 0.284$ ,  $SE = 0.276$ ,  $Wald \chi^2 = 1.059$ ,  $p = .304$ ,  $OR = 1.329$ ) or widowed ( $\beta = -0.134$ ,  $SE = 0.612$ ,  $Wald \chi^2 = 0.048$ ,  $p = .827$ ,  $OR = 0.875$ ) did not significantly affect the likelihood of having high close relationships. This indicates that these factors may have a more complex or indirect impact on the mental health assets of teachers. The lack of significant findings in these areas suggests that more refined or longitudinal studies might be needed to uncover the subtler influences of these variables.

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study have several practical implications. First, the identified need for stronger social support networks among teachers calls for initiatives that foster community and peer support within schools. Professional development programs should include components that address social and emotional well-being, alongside traditional pedagogical skills. Additionally, tailored interventions that address the specific needs of female teachers and those outside the prime working age of 30-39 could help mitigate feelings of isolation and enhance job satisfaction.

Moreover, the mixed findings regarding physical and nervous health liabilities suggest that schools should provide more comprehensive health and wellness programs. These programs could include mental health counseling, stress management workshops, and physical health initiatives to support teachers in managing their overall well-being.

In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of addressing the mental health needs of Filipino special education teachers in Clark County. By recognizing and responding to the specific demographic and professional factors that influence their well-being, educational institutions can create more supportive and sustainable working environments for these essential educators.

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