

# Level of Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue Among Selected Teachers in the Philippines and the United States of America

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## ABSTRACT

Teachers' compassion often motivates them to go the extra mile in supporting their students, which provides personal and professional satisfaction. However, this dedication can also lead to compassion fatigue, manifested as burnout and secondary traumatic stress. This study aimed to identify the levels of compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue among teachers and examine their relationship with demographic profiles, including age, sex, years of teaching experience, and the country of current employment. A standardized questionnaire was administered via Google Forms to 50 teachers from the United States and the Philippines using purposive sampling. The study employed a descriptive-comparative research design. Descriptive statistics, including percentages and mean scores, were used to summarize the data, while the Mann-Whitney U Test and Kruskal-Wallis Test were applied to determine significant differences between groups. Results indicate that the majority of respondents are female, aged between late 30s to 40s, and have more than five years of teaching experience. Overall, teachers reported experiencing compassion satisfaction "very often," suggesting a high sense of fulfillment in their roles as compassionate educators. In contrast, burnout and secondary traumatic stress were rated as "sometimes," indicating variability in the experience of compassion fatigue. Significant differences were observed in compassion satisfaction across age groups and years of teaching experience, with older and more experienced teachers reporting higher satisfaction. Burnout was more prevalent among teachers in the United States, whereas secondary traumatic stress was more pronounced among teachers in the Philippines. Based on these findings, the study recommends strategies to minimize and manage compassion fatigue among teachers, thereby enhancing their well-being and sustaining their professional effectiveness.

## KEYWORDS

Compassion satisfaction; compassion fatigue; burnout; Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)

## INTRODUCTION

Education empowers not only the intellect but also the holistic development of individuals. Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping students' lives, nurturing their academic, social, and emotional growth, and fostering the development of responsible and competent citizens.

However, the very compassion that drives teachers to go beyond their professional duties often exposes them to emotional fatigue, burnout, and compassion fatigue. Teaching, by its very nature, is considered a “helping profession,” requiring constant emotional labor and empathy. Despite its noble mission, teaching continues to rank among the most stressful occupations worldwide (Education Support Partnership [ESP], 2022; García-Carmona et al., 2023). Studies have shown that teachers frequently experience high levels of work-related stress, comparable to those of healthcare professionals such as nurses (Greenberg, 2016; Pressley & Ha, 2021).

The challenges faced by educators extend beyond instructional demands. Behavioral and mental health issues among students significantly affect teachers’ own psychological well-being (Eddy et al., 2020; Harding et al., 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic further intensified these pressures, forcing teachers to transition abruptly to remote learning, often without adequate preparation or support (Kaden, 2020; Kim et al., 2022). This shift increased workloads, blurred work-life boundaries, and amplified emotional exhaustion. Consequently, many educators have reported experiencing compassion fatigue—a specific form of burnout that stems from prolonged exposure to others’ distress (Figley, 2021). This condition not only undermines teachers’ mental health but also impacts their professional efficacy and the quality of education delivered to students.

Burnout syndrome, often manifested through emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment, remains a growing concern in education (Carmona, 2018; García-Carmona & González-Gómez, 2024). In contrast, compassion satisfaction—the fulfillment derived from helping others—acts as a protective factor that enhances teachers’ resilience and well-being (Stamm, 2022). Balancing these two constructs is crucial to sustaining educators’ motivation and mental health.

Despite the global attention to teacher burnout, research comparing compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue between different cultural and educational contexts remains limited. With mental health increasingly recognized as a public health priority (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023), it is essential to examine these phenomena across countries with distinct educational systems and cultural expectations. Raimondi (2021) emphasized the need for more empirical studies addressing compassion dynamics in the education sector to fill existing gaps in the literature.

Thus, this study seeks to determine the level of compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue among selected teachers in the Philippines and the United States of America. By exploring similarities and differences across these contexts, this research aims to provide insights that will inform policy recommendations, teacher support programs, and interventions to enhance teacher well-being and educational quality in both nations.

### ***Objective Of the Study***

This study seeks to determine the level of compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue among selected teachers in the Philippines and the United States of America. By exploring similarities and differences across these contexts, this research aims to provide insights that would inform policy recommendations, teacher support programs, and interventions to enhance teacher well-being and educational quality in both nations.

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

The study employed a descriptive-comparative research design to analyze and interpret the levels of compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue among teachers. Data were gathered using a standardized instrument adapted from the Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL) developed by Stamm (2010), which measures Compassion Satisfaction, Burnout,

and Secondary Traumatic Stress. The survey was administered online through Google Forms for accessibility and convenience.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts: Part I collected demographic information, including age, sex, years of teaching experience, and the country where the respondent currently teaches; Part II measured the respondents' levels of compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress using a Likert-type scale to assess frequency of experience.

A purposive sampling technique was utilized to identify 50 teacher-respondents—24 from the Philippines and 26 from the United States—who met the study's inclusion criteria. The researchers distributed the survey link electronically and invited participants to indicate how frequently they experienced compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue in their professional practice.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics such as percentage were used to summarize the respondents' profiles, while mean scores determined the overall levels of compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress. To test for significant differences among groups according to demographic variables, the study used the Mann-Whitney U Test and the Kruskal-Wallis Test, both appropriate for non-parametric data. The results were interpreted using the established Likert scale ranges for each construct and evaluated for statistical significance based on the computed p-values.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1.** Profile of the Respondents

	F	%
Sex		
Male	10	20.00
Female	40	80.00
Age		
25-34 years old	17	34.00
35-44 years old	19	38.00
45-54 years old	12	24.00
55-64 years old	2	4.00
Years of Teaching Experience		
1-5 years old	6	12.00
6-10 years old	16	32.00
11-15 years old	10	20.00
16-20 years old	8	16.00
21-25 years old	6	12.00
More than 25 years	4	8.00
Country Teaching (Present)		
Philippines	24	48.00
USA	26	52.00

Table 1 shows the profile of the teacher-respondents: sex, age, years of teaching, and country teaching. The table shows that 80% (n=40) of the respondents are female and 20% of them (n=10) are male. It also shows that 38% (n=19) of the respondents are 35-44 years old and 4% (n=2) are 55-64 years old. The respondents also indicated their years of teaching experience,

which shows that 32% (n=16) have been teaching for 6-10 years and 8% (n=4) have been teaching for more than 25 years. The respondents of this study are teachers in the Philippines and USA, which shows that 52% (n=26) are teaching in the USA and 48% (n=24) are

teaching in the Philippines.

**Table 2.** Level of Compassion Satisfaction

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
- I get satisfaction from being able to (help) people.	4.72	0.4544	Very Often
- I feel invigorated after working with those I (help).	4.34	0.7457	Very Often
- I like my work as a (helper).	4.20	0.8081	Often
- I am pleased with how I am able to keep up with (helping) techniques and protocols.	4.44	0.6114	Very Often
- My work makes me feel satisfied.	4.20	0.6708	Often
- I have happy thoughts and feelings about those I (help) and how I could help them.	4.50	0.5055	Very Often
- I believe I can make a difference through my work.	4.40	0.6062	Very Often
- I am proud of what I can do to (help).	4.44	0.6749	Very Often
- I have thoughts that I am a "success" as a (helper).	3.90	0.7073	Often
- I am happy that I chose to do this work.	4.42	0.7021	Very Often
<b>Aggregate Mean</b>	<b>4.36</b>	<b>0.6483</b>	<b>Very Often</b>

Table 2 shows the level of compassion satisfaction of the teacher-respondents in their professional life as helpers. The aggregate mean for the variable, Level of Compassion Satisfaction, is 4.36 (SD=0.6483) with an interpretation of “Very Often”. Among the statements provided, the “teachers’ satisfaction for helping people” has the highest mean (4.72; SD=0.4544), indicating “Very Often”. Also, “Teachers are proud of what they can do to help” and “pleased with how they can keep up with the helping techniques and protocols” have higher means of 4.44 (SD=0.6749, 0.6114), which indicates “Very Often”. The table also indicates that “teachers have thoughts that they are a ‘success’ as helpers” has the lowest mean (3.90; SD=0.7073), which is interpreted as “Often.”

**Table 3.** Level of Compassion Fatigue in terms of Burnout

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
- I am happy.	3.22	1.3291	Sometimes
- I feel connected to others.	3.36	1.1912	Sometimes
- I am not as productive at work because I am losing sleep over traumatic experiences of a person I (help).	2.18	0.9194	Rarely
- I feel trapped by my job as a (helper).	2.24	1.0415	Rarely
- I have beliefs that sustain me.	3.14	1.5128	Sometimes
- I am the person I always wanted to be.	3.12	1.2889	Sometimes
- I feel worn out because of my work as a (helper).	2.82	0.9190	Sometimes
- I feel overwhelmed because my case (work) load seems endless.	3.04	1.0493	Sometimes
- I feel "bogged down" by the system.	2.68	0.7136	Sometimes
- I am a very caring person.	3.30	1.4461	Sometimes
<b>Aggregate Mean</b>	<b>2.91</b>	<b>1.1011</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>

Table 3 shows the burnout level of the teacher-respondents in their professional life as helpers. The table shows the aggregate mean for the variable, Burnout Level, which is m=2.91 (SD=1.1011) with an interpretation of “Sometimes”. Among the statements provided, the “teachers' feeling of connection to others” has the highest mean=3.36 (SD=1.1912) with an interpretation of ‘Sometimes’. Also, the statement “I am a very caring

person” has a higher mean=3.30 (SD=1.4461) with an interpretation of “Sometimes”. The statement “I am not as productive at work because I am losing sleep over traumatic experiences of a person I (help)” and “I feel trapped by my job as a helper” have mean=2.24 (SD=0.9194) and mean=2.18 (SD=1.0415) respectively which are interpreted as “Rarely.”

**Table 4.** Secondary Traumatic Stress

Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
- I am preoccupied with more than one person I (help).	3.04	0.9472	Sometimes
- I jump or am startled by unexpected sounds.	2.44	1.0537	Sometimes
- I find it difficult to separate my personal life from my life as a (helper).	2.52	0.9951	Rarely
- I think that I might have been affected by the traumatic stress of those I (help).	2.10	0.8148	Rarely
- Because of my (helping), I have felt "on edge" about various things.	2.48	0.9746	Sometimes
- I feel depressed because of the traumatic experiences of the people I (help).	2.22	0.8875	Sometimes
- I feel as though I am experiencing the trauma of someone I have (helped).	2.24	0.9163	Sometimes
- I avoid certain activities or situations because they remind me of frightening experiences of the people I (help).	2.34	0.9822	Sometimes
- As a result of my (helping), I have intrusive, frightening thoughts.	2.00	0.9481	Rarely
- I can't recall important parts of my work with trauma victims.	2.12	1.0431	Sometimes
<b>Aggregate Mean</b>	<b>2.35</b>	<b>0.9559</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>

Table 4 shows the level of secondary traumatic stress of the teacher-respondents in their professional life as helpers. The table shows the aggregate mean for the variable which is 2.35 (SD=0.9559) with an interpretation of “Sometimes”. Among the statements provided, the “I am preoccupied with more than one person I (help)” has the highest mean=3.04 (SD=0.9472) with an interpretation of “Sometimes”. The statement “I find it difficult to separate my personal life from my life as a (helper)” has a higher mean=2.52 (SD=0.9951) with an interpretation of “Sometimes”. Also, the statement “As a result of my (helping), I have intrusive, frightening thoughts” has the lowest mean=2.00 (SD=0.9481) with an interpretation of “Rarely”.

**Table 5.** Significant Difference on the Level of Compassion Satisfaction, Burnout and Secondary Traumatic Stress as respondents are grouped by Age, Sex, Years of Teaching Experience and Country Currently Teaching of which *p-value*<0.05 (with \*) is significant

Variables	p-value	Interpretation
Age and Compassion Satisfaction	0.022	Significant
Age and Burnout	0.085	Not Significant
Age and Secondary Traumatic Stress	0.976	Not Significant
Years of Teaching Experience and Compassion Satisfaction	0.729	Not Significant
Years of Teaching Experience and Burnout	0.711	Not Significant
Sex and Secondary Traumatic Stress	0.158	Not Significant
Years of Teaching Experience and Compassion Satisfaction	0.043*	Not Significant
Sex and Burnout	0.218	Significant

Sex and Secondary Traumatic Stress	0.032*	Not Significant
Years of Teaching Experience and Compassion Satisfaction	0.763	Significant
Years of Teaching Experience and Burnout	0.017*	Not Significant
Years of Teaching Experience and Secondary Traumatic Stress	0.043*	Significant
Country Currently Teaching and Compassion Satisfaction	0.218	Not Significant
Country Currently Teaching and Burnout	0.032*	Significant
Country Currently Teaching and Secondary Traumatic Stress	0.01*	Significant

*Significant*

- *Age and Compassion Satisfaction - (45 - 64 years old)*
- *Years of Teaching Experience and Compassion Satisfaction - (21 years and above)*
- *Years of Teaching Experience and Secondary Traumatic Stress - (6 - 15 years)*
- *Country Currently Teaching and Burnout - (USA)*
- *Country Currently Teaching and Secondary Traumatic Stress - (Philippines)*

Table 5 shows the significant difference on the Level of Compassion Satisfaction, Burnout, and Secondary Traumatic Stress as respondents are grouped by age, sex, years of teaching experience, and the country currently teaching. The table shows that age groups 45-54 and 55-64 years old have a significant difference ( $p\text{-value}=0.022$ ) compared to the other age groups in terms of compassion satisfaction. Moreover, in terms of compassion satisfaction, it also shows that 21 years and above of teaching experience have a significant difference ( $p\text{-value}=0.043$ ) with the other groups. However, those with 6-15 years of teaching experience, in terms of secondary traumatic stress, have a significant difference ( $p\text{-value}=0.032$ ) compared to the other groups. The table also shows that teacher-respondents currently teaching in the USA have significant differences ( $p\text{-value}=0.017$ ) in terms of burnout than those teaching in the Philippines. On the other hand, teacher-respondents currently teaching in the Philippines have a significant difference ( $p\text{-value}=0.001$ ) in terms of their secondary traumatic stress than those in the USA.

The study surveyed 50 teachers, with 80% female and 20% male respondents. This aligns with the well-established pattern of teaching being a female-dominated profession. According to the World Bank (2020), 87.42% of teachers in the Philippines were female, while in the United States, Zippia (2023) reports 74.3% of teachers are women. The results of this study confirm that teaching remains a profession largely occupied by women, which may have implications for compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue due to socialized expectations of empathy and caregiving often associated with female educators.

Most respondents in this study were aged 30–49 and had over five years of teaching experience, with nearly equal representation from the United States ( $n=26$ ) and the Philippines ( $n=24$ ). This demographic distribution allows for a comparative analysis across national and experiential contexts.

### **Compassion Satisfaction**

The results indicate that teachers generally experience compassion satisfaction “very often,” reflecting their emotional fulfillment from helping students. This finding aligns with Burns (2021), who emphasized that compassion satisfaction is a primary motivator for educators, as the intrinsic reward of positively impacting students’ lives sustains their engagement and professional satisfaction. Compassion satisfaction serves as a buffer against occupational stress, helping teachers maintain motivation despite the emotional demands of their work.

The analysis also shows that compassion satisfaction varies significantly with age and years of experience. Older and more experienced teachers report higher levels of compassion

satisfaction compared to younger, less experienced teachers. This supports the findings of Borginis (2018), which suggest that older educators are less emotionally exhausted and derive greater personal accomplishment from teaching. Younger teachers often face adjustment challenges and high stress, which can reduce their initial levels of satisfaction and increase vulnerability to burnout and attrition. This pattern underscores the importance of mentoring programs and targeted support for early-career teachers to foster resilience and sustain compassion satisfaction.

### ***Compassion Fatigue, Burnout, and Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)***

Teachers in the study generally rated compassion fatigue, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress as “sometimes,” indicating variability in responses. A higher standard deviation suggests that some teachers experience these challenges intensely, while others manage them more effectively. Chacon et al. (2021) define compassion fatigue as a psychological condition of anxiety and distress resulting from the strain of helping others, highlighting its potential impact on professional performance. Burns (2021) also notes that declining empathy can manifest as compassion fatigue, which may negatively influence classroom dynamics and student outcomes.

Comparative analysis shows that burnout and STS differ by national context. Teachers in the United States report higher burnout, while teachers in the Philippines exhibit higher levels of secondary traumatic stress. The higher burnout in the United States may reflect systemic pressures such as high-stakes testing, parental expectations, and accountability measures. Bouchrika (2022) reports that 44% of K–12 teachers and 35% of higher-education instructors in the U.S. often or always experience burnout, ranking teaching among the most stressful occupations. Limited resources and high performance demands exacerbate this stress, contributing to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

In contrast, Philippine teachers report higher secondary traumatic stress due to contextual factors such as poverty, lack of resources, and pandemic-related challenges. Correa-Patag & Pela-Tecson (2021) emphasize that exposure to students’ financial and social hardships, including providing support for online learning, increases teachers’ vulnerability to STS. Philippine educators often witness their students’ trauma firsthand and may take on additional emotional and material responsibilities to support them. This highlights how socio-economic context and cultural expectations of teacher empathy influence the type of occupational stress experienced.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study’s results reinforce the complex interplay between compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue. Compassion satisfaction appears to act as a protective factor, supporting teachers’ resilience and motivation, while burnout and secondary traumatic stress represent risk factors that threaten professional well-being. Importantly, the findings suggest that interventions to support teachers must be context-specific. For example:

- **For younger or less experienced teachers**, mentorship, emotional support programs, and stress management training may help cultivate compassion satisfaction and prevent early burnout.
- **For teachers in high-burnout contexts**, such as in the U.S., workload management, administrative support, and professional development may mitigate chronic stress.
- **For teachers exposed to secondary traumatic stress**, such as in the Philippines, providing access to mental health resources, peer support networks, and professional counseling can reduce the psychological burden of students’ hardships.

Additionally, the study indicates that while teachers are inherently empathetic and motivated by compassion satisfaction, institutional and societal factors—such as large class sizes, insufficient resources, and socio-economic challenges—can amplify compassion fatigue and burnout. Therefore, addressing compassion fatigue is not only an individual responsibility but also an organizational and systemic concern

### **Recommendations**

Based on the results of this study, the researchers propose the following recommendations to address compassion fatigue, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress among teachers:

**Addressing Burnout,** teachers experiencing burnout should be provided with outlets to share experiences and strategies for stress reduction. Practical steps to minimize burnout include: Reframe your mindset: Adopt a growth mindset by viewing challenges as opportunities for learning and professional development. Prioritize self-care: Set aside time for rest, exercise, hobbies, and activities that recharge energy and mental well-being. Seek support: Ask for help from colleagues, mentors, or mental health professionals when faced with overwhelming tasks. Maintain social connections: Engage in personal and professional relationships to reduce isolation and foster emotional support. Set boundaries: Establish limits on work-related responsibilities to prevent overextension and preserve personal time. These strategies encourage teachers to manage stress proactively and maintain their compassion satisfaction, which can buffer against burnout.

**Coping with Secondary Traumatic Stress,** teachers exposed to secondary traumatic stress (STS) can adopt coping mechanisms that address emotional and psychological strain: Creative expression: Engage in activities such as painting, cooking, journaling, woodworking, or other hobbies to channel stress constructively. Assertiveness and time management: Prioritize tasks, say no when necessary, and create structured schedules to reduce overload. Celebrate accomplishments: Recognize personal and professional achievements to maintain motivation and positive self-regard. Plan for coping and share with others: Develop personal strategies for managing stress and encourage sharing experiences with peers to normalize challenges and build support networks. These approaches help teachers process vicarious trauma and reduce its long-term emotional impact.

**Institutional and Community Support,** based on the findings of Correa-Patag & Pelaez-Tecson (2021), local governments and educational institutions should collaborate with external stakeholders to promote teacher wellness. Recommendations include: Wellness programs: Implement workshops, seminars, and training focused on stress management, trauma-informed teaching, and resilience building. Access to mental health services: Provide free or affordable counseling, therapy, or wellness services for public school teachers. Promote work-life balance: Encourage policies that reduce excessive workloads and allow flexibility to support teachers' personal and family needs. Recognition and morale-boosting initiatives: Create systems to acknowledge teachers' efforts and contributions, enhancing compassion satisfaction and professional fulfillment. By combining individual coping strategies with institutional and community support, teachers can better manage compassion fatigue, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress, fostering healthier professional lives and improved student outcomes.

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