Facing Workplace Challenges: A Phenomenological Study on Nut- Cracking Situations and Employee Adaptation

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Abstract

This study investigates teachers lived experiences in "nut cracking" workplace situations characterized by intense demands, high pressure, and the need for rapid adaptation, emotional regulation, and cognitive resilience. It aims to understand how systemic and contextual factors shape stress, coping, and resilience among teachers. Grounded in the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping and the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model, the research employs a qualitative phenomenological design using in-depth semi-structured interviews with ten teachers from North Brooke's Point District Offices. Data were analyzed using Clarke and Braun's Reflexive Thematic Analysis. Findings reveal eight major themes highlighting systemic overload, role expansion, boundary collapse in remote postings, low psychological safety, policy volatility, and role ambiguity, all contributing to chronic fatigue, instability, and defensive work behaviors. Teachers also experience moral strain and heightened threat appraisals in high-stakes environments. Despite these challenges, participants demonstrate adaptive coping through workflow management, collegial support, and meaning-making practices such as mentoring and boundary setting. While these conditions lead to reduced performance, declining motivation, and compromised well-being, they also foster personal and professional growth. The study concludes by proposing the Teacher Nut Cracking Resilience and Support Model, emphasizing the interaction between job demands, organizational climate, coping resources, and meaning-making processes. It underscores the need for workload rationalization, enhanced psychological safety, consistent policy implementation, and institutionalized support systems.

Keywords: Education; teacher workload, psychological safety, coping strategies, resilience; phenomenology, Reflexive Thematic Analysis; Philippines.