

Research Article

Safe Spaces and Stress Triggers of Filipino Novice Teachers in a Private School

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Abstract: This qualitative research explored the experiences of novice teachers in a private school in Iloilo City, focusing on their ideas of safe spaces and various stress triggers and coping strategies within their professional environment. Using a narrative inquiry approach, the study gathered personal accounts from 13 purposively selected novice teachers to understand how they navigate the challenges of their early careers. The findings revealed that novice teachers recognize their working environment is challenging yet supportive. A safe space is an environment with a strong support system, clear systems and professional boundaries, and without the fear of judgment. Despite these affirming notions, several stress triggers emerged, including stress from responsibilities and deliverables, the weight of personal and professional expectations, and the influence of supervision and management. These factors were identified as significant contributors to overwhelming and disengagement among teachers. Despite these challenges, they had coping strategies such as setting personal boundaries, time for leisure, connecting with trusted colleagues, and drawing strength from personal faith and reflection. The study highlights the value of a supportive, understanding, and well-managed work environment in maintaining teacher well-being and engagement. This study recommends that school leaders acknowledge these stressors and prioritize the creation of emotionally-safe and professionally-nurturing workplaces. Meaningful yet straightforward measures such as clear communication, manageable workloads, collaborative decision-making, and self-care opportunities can significantly improve novice teachers' professional experiences.

Keywords: safe space; stress triggers; coping strategies; novice teachers; experiences

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1. Introduction

A workplace must go beyond just being a space for completing tasks; it should actively foster an environment that promotes collaboration, creativity, and productivity. For novice teachers, particularly fresh graduates, this environment is crucial for supporting their career growth and ensuring they can fulfil their professional responsibilities (Hipolito, 2022).

Safe spaces have been widely acknowledged as essential for creating a positive learning environment where individuals feel respected and emotionally secure, enabling them to express themselves without fear of judgment (Flensner & Von der Lippe, 2019). In an educational context, a safe space refers to physical safety and an emotional and social atmosphere conducive to personal expression and professional development (Wettstein et al., 2021).

Creating such environments is not a solitary task but one that requires collective effort, particularly from teachers and the broader school community. Research has shown that fostering a favourable school climate necessitates the active collaboration of teachers with colleagues in an organized manner to ensure that safety and respect are consistently upheld (Hammar Chiriatic et al., 2023). This collaborative approach strengthens the workplace environment, ensuring it supports the students and teachers, fostering an atmosphere where all can thrive.

Although much research has focused on creating safe spaces for students, there is limited exploration of the safety of the work environment for teachers, especially novice teachers. Specifically, there is a gap in understanding how “honest mistakes” – crucial for work

engagement – impact novice teachers’ professional growth and emotional resilience (Gargantini et al., 2022). This research gap signals a need to examine how novice teachers perceive and benefit from safe spaces in the workplace, particularly regarding the challenges they face in their early teaching careers.

This study aims to fill these gaps by exploring the experiences of novice teachers in a private school in Iloilo City. By focusing on their narratives regarding safe spaces, stress triggers, and work engagement, the research seeks to uncover how these teachers view the emotional and professional support they receive. The study will also explore the importance of collaboration among colleagues and the role of safe spaces in fostering a positive work environment, contributing to a broader understanding of teacher well-being and professional development, particularly for those at the start of their careers.

The study’s primary goal is to examine novice teachers’ experiences of safe spaces and stress triggers within their professional environment. The research questions include: (1) What narratives emerge about safe spaces in the workplace as experienced by novice teachers? and (2) What personal accounts reveal the common stress triggers and coping mechanism by novice teachers?

2. Materials and Methods

This study employs a qualitative research approach (Ho, 2022) using narrative inquiry to explore the experiences of novice teachers in a private school in Iloilo City, focusing on their challenges and support systems.

To examine these experiences, the study uses narrative inquiry, a qualitative method that centres on human stories and the meaning individuals attach to their lived experiences. Narrative inquiry allows for an in-depth exploration of the personal narratives of novice teachers, collected through life story interviews (Frandsen et al., 2021). This method allows the research to go beyond surface-level observations, uncovering deeper emotional and contextual dimensions that shape how novice teachers perceive and respond to their teaching environment.

The informants were 13 novice teachers selected through purposive sampling (Campbell et al., 2020), consisting of probationary teachers in their first to third year of employment at the school who were willing to share their experiences. The informants were deemed qualified through inclusion criteria, which included: 1) Informants must be willing to share their experiences and insights, 2) They must be currently employed in a private school in Iloilo City, and 3) They must be probationary employees in their first to third year of teaching.

The primary data source was in-depth, semi-structured interviews, which allowed participants to share their personal narratives regarding their work environment and professional growth (Frandsen et al., 2021).

A researcher-made interview guide with open-ended questions was used to gather data on themes such as safe spaces, stress triggers, and work engagement, providing a structured yet flexible approach to the interviews. Data was collected through individual semi-structured interviews, which were audio-recorded with participants’ consent to ensure accurate and detailed responses.

For data analysis, this study employed Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis, a method well-suited for identifying patterns and themes within qualitative data. This framework includes identifying patterns and themes through coding, organizing the data into categories, and refining themes to ensure they align with the study’s objectives.

The analysis began by familiarizing the researcher with the data by reading through the interview transcripts and observation notes multiple times. Important pieces of data aligned with the research questions generated initial codes, which were then organized into broader categories, allowing the researcher to uncover key themes related to the teachers’ experiences.

The final themes were clearly defined and supported by direct quotes from informants, allowing for a comprehensive report that reflected the core aspects of their experiences. The thematic analysis enabled the researcher to draw meaningful conclusions and provide a detailed understanding of the factors affecting novice teachers’ work engagement and well-being.

3. Results

3.1. Defining Safe Spaces Through Stories in the Workplace

In private schools in Iloilo City, novice teachers are placed under probationary status,

which means they must meet specific performance standards and expectations before they can be granted regular employment.

This period often comes with a heightened sense of pressure, as teachers are closely monitored and evaluated not only on their teaching performance but also on how well they integrate into the school's culture and respond to administrative demands.

The experience of being under probation may significantly shape how these teachers view their workplace. Some find a sense of belonging and support through collegial relationships and fair leadership, which helps them adjust and thrive despite the demands. Within this context, the teacher-informants in this study were asked to describe their current work environment and reflect on how they perceive what a safe space means to them in the workplace.

3.1.1. Recognizing the Present Work Environment

Given that many novice teachers in private schools are fresh graduates, a highly demanding work environment can easily become a barrier to their growth and professional adjustment. The common understanding is that these teachers describe their current workplace as challenging yet supportive (Phelps et al., 2024).

Helga captures this balance by saying, "It is high pressure." Colleen further highlights the importance of a cooperative atmosphere, emphasizing the strong sense of camaraderie among the faculty: "The work environment is highly cooperative, and there's a strong spirit of community." On the same note, Jane reflects on the reality of a teacher's life, noting that "the demands of academic responsibilities, extracurricular activities, and workloads can sometimes create a high-pressure environment, leading to moments of stress."

Such a workplace culture is crucial, where encouragement and collaboration are present. Athena affirms this, describing that "the environment in my workplace is positive, supportive, and safe." Charlotte, meanwhile, acknowledged that while no workplace is perfect, having a space where new teachers are allowed to learn and grow matters a lot. She reflects that "like any place, it has its imperfections. However, I feel like I am in a space where I can learn, make mistakes, and improve."

These accounts suggest that while challenges are unavoidable, a nurturing and inclusive environment cushions novice teachers against burnout and cultivates resilience and long-term professional satisfaction.

3.1.2. Creating a Strong Support System for Novice Teachers

In every workplace, it is crucial to have a strong set of supporting elements to keep an employee afloat despite the overwhelming demands. Helga reflects on this through her own experience during her first year of teaching, noting how invaluable the guidance of senior teachers was in helping her settle in: "The feeling that 'there is no such thing as stupid questions' made it feel easier to ask for explanations or guidance."

Similarly, Grace shares how meaningful consistent support from her subject area coordinator (SAC) and peers has been: "I feel genuinely supported by my SAC and peers, especially during committee work where they consistently lend a hand." This type of direct social support from supervisors and colleagues is widely recognized for its positive impact on employee self-efficacy and overall performance.

Arianne echoes this sentiment by recalling how she felt encouraged and capable even when assigned to lead a major school event: "...when we were the head committee of the prom, I never felt like I was treated as someone who is not trainable."

Athena offers a similar account: "Taking on such a big responsibility could have been overwhelming, but my colleagues and supervisors showed their trust in me and offered help every step of the way." Megan likewise recalls a problematic situation that was made easier by the support of her SAC and school personnel: "During a challenging parent meeting, my SAC, guidance personnel, adviser, sat in with me and helped guide the conversation."

Charlotte highlights how even small gestures of support can leave a lasting impact: "Even the little things like sharing tips, giving me extra materials, or just being there to listen. That kind of support really helped boost my confidence and made me feel safe and comfortable in the workplace."

Rina's story illustrates how institutional support can extend beyond professional matters and personal well-being: "...when I was preparing to take the Licensure Examination for Teachers, I needed to file a two-week leave to study. I felt very supported because the school approved my leave, and some of my co-teachers even covered my classes while I was away." Cultivating this kind of support network is essential for novice teachers' professional

adjustment and safeguarding their well-being as they navigate the early stages of their careers.

3.1.3. Defining Clear Systems and Professional Boundaries

Establishing clear systems and maintaining professional boundaries within the workplace provides structure, helping teachers manage their responsibilities with greater ease and confidence.

Grace illustrates this by describing what a safe space means to her: "...an environment where I feel respected, trusted, and valued – not just for what I do, but for who I am – surrounded by supportive people, clear systems..." This reflection highlights how systematized processes and a culture of respect contribute to a nurturing work environment.

Jane echoes the significance of a secure and collaborative workplace, describing: "...workplace provides a supportive and secure environment where educators can collaborate, seek assistance, and engage in professional growth."

Helga, meanwhile, points out that while much focus is understandably placed on student welfare, similar efforts should be extended to teachers: "...I think more opportunities can be opened for teachers' context to be considered in making admin decisions."

Kelly also emphasizes the role of leadership in creating a supportive environment, sharing: "...having open and honest communication with colleagues, being supported by leadership, and knowing that my well-being matters." Charlotte further extends this idea by highlighting the importance of professional boundaries and maintaining a positive peer culture: "It also means being around non-toxic coworkers who are in the right state of mind, who are kind, open-minded, and easy to talk to."

Ann similarly stresses that a safe work environment involves mutual support, appreciation, and respect for personal and professional boundaries: "...a safe space is when you feel supported and appreciated, then respecting professional and personal boundaries."

Recognizing the role of continuous professional development in cultivating supportive school environments, Jane reflects this in her experience, noting: "...whether in professional growth, instructional improvements, their encouragement and shared commitment to excellence foster a motivating and empowering environment."

These insights suggest that fostering a genuinely safe and supportive environment requires a thoughtful combination of well-defined systems, nurturing leadership, open communication, and upholding healthy boundaries.

3.1.4. Encouraging Open Dialogue and Creating Safe Spaces

In establishing safe spaces, it is fundamental to give teachers – or any employee, per se – the ability to express themselves without fearing retaliation. Colleen echoes this notion and shares that a safe space encourages openness without fear of negative consequences. She notes, "For me, that means you are being supported, seen, heard, and free to express your thoughts without negative consequences." Charlotte echoes this sentiment, emphasizing the importance of workplace openness: "...being able to speak up whether it is to share a concern or suggest something without feeling scared or judged."

Additionally, Kelly explains that a safe environment should welcome growth opportunities for everyone, regardless of rank or tenure: "...where mistakes are treated as learning opportunities, and every voice is welcomed regardless of rank or experience." For Jane, the defining elements of a supportive professional environment are mentorship and collaboration. She reflects, "...willingness to assist in preparations, provide insights, and offer encouragement highlights the strong culture of collaboration and mentorship within the department."

Helga also stresses the importance of involving teachers in decision-making, noting, "...speak their mind and to have such thoughts be seriously taken into account when planning administrative decisions."

Athena further highlights how a supportive environment positively affects both teachers' morale and students' classroom experiences: "When the environment feels safe, I am more confident, more motivated, and better able to do my job, and I can pass that same feeling of safety on to my students, too." Charlotte affirms this, saying, "...it makes work feel lighter and more positive. That kind of environment helps me grow and do my best..."

For the informants, there is an idea that a collaborative and supportive culture can meaningfully uplift teacher morale and productivity. Clint captures this well, reflecting, "Even with a heavy workload, colleagues make it bearable so that even in silence, your mind remains sound and sane." These collective reflections on fostering a culture of openness, mentorship, and recognition in strengthening individual teacher performance and the overall school

environment.

3.2. *Triggering Factors for Workplace Stress and Coping Mechanisms*

Novice teachers are in the early stages of their careers. They are navigating various challenges, such as adjusting to new responsibilities, establishing professional relationships, and coping with the pressures of meeting academic and administrative expectations.

In this study, informants also shared how these stressors manifest in their daily routines, particularly pointing to heavy workloads, micromanaging practices, unclear expectations, and difficulty maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

Through their narratives, it became clear that stress in the workplace is not merely a matter of individual resilience but also a reflection of the environment in which teachers are placed. By shedding light on these personal accounts, this theme offers a deeper understanding of how stress is experienced, perceived, and managed by those in the early stages of their teaching careers.

3.2.1. Stress from Responsibilities and Deliverables

Novice teachers face significant challenges, particularly in managing classrooms, organizing their time effectively, and addressing the diverse needs of students (Felisilda et al., 2024).

For many novice teachers in private schools, who are often fresh graduates, a highly demanding work environment can hinder their growth and professional adjustment. Jane reflects on this reality, noting, "...the demands of academic responsibilities, extracurricular activities, and workloads can sometimes create a high-pressure environment, leading to moments of stress."

To navigate these challenges, novice teachers require ample time, consistent support, and proper mentorship as they develop their skills and adapt to the complexities of teaching. Helga captures this balance in her description: "... it is high pressure, yet there is space and opportunity for learning." Kelly echoes this sense of shared growth and mutual assistance, adding, "Everyone is willing to help each other out."

Athena affirms this, describing: "The environment in my workplace is positive, supportive, and safe." Charlotte, meanwhile, acknowledges that while no workplace is perfect, having a space where new teachers are allowed to learn and grow matters a lot: "...like any place, it has its imperfections. However, I feel like I am in a space where I can learn, make mistakes, and improve."

These accounts suggest that while challenges are unavoidable, a nurturing and inclusive environment cushions novice teachers against burnout and cultivates resilience and long-term professional satisfaction.

3.2.2. Personal and Professional Expectations

The theme of striving to meet high expectations, often leading to stress, is a recurring experience for novice teachers. Charlotte reveals how the pressure to perform well, especially during observations, can be overwhelming. She states, "I get stressed whenever my head teachers observe me. I tend to overthink things like how I speak, how the students react, and if I am meeting their expectations."

Sheryl shares a similar experience, reflecting on her first two years of teaching: "...especially during my 1st and 2nd year of teaching, where during feedback, my former supervisor expects something from me, yet she is not doing any intervention to help me improve." She adds, "She keeps criticizing me for doing better, yet when I ask for help or questions, she will just say she's busy or return the problem to me to resolve it on my own."

Jane also reflects on the stress she feels due to high expectations: "I wanted to ensure that I was delivering lessons effectively and meeting the expectations of both the students and the school." Colleen resonates with this notion, attributing much of her stress to the expectations placed on her by herself, her colleagues, and her superiors: "It is from my expectations, colleagues and higher-ups."

These experiences underline the importance of providing constructive, supportive feedback that encourages novice teachers to refine their practices while mitigating the pressure they feel from external demands. The current study suggests that a more balanced and structured feedback system could help alleviate stress, foster professional growth, and enhance teacher well-being.

3.2.3. Influence of Supervision and Management

In the context of teaching, Clint expressed how the presence of tenured teachers

becomes a crucial source of guidance and reassurance for novice educators. He shared that “tenured teachers are willing to help, offices are open when things get confusing, and even probationary colleagues assist when they know something.”

However, Nora offered a different perspective, pointing out that while informal support exists, there remains a need for more structured avenues for mentoring and learning. She reflected, “...somehow the tenured teachers are supportive when it comes to teaching us the do’s and don’ts of the school, but I wish there could have been a formal avenue for us to learn things.” This concern was echoed by Grace, who highlighted how even a welcoming culture can be undermined by management practices. She remarked, “...it is hindered by disorganized leadership and micromanagement. My peers appreciate me, but I feel unsupported by the system.”

Kelly shared a related experience, stating that “...there are times when I do not feel fully supported by my SAC. She insists on changing my plans because she believed they would not work or be organized enough.” Similarly, Helga emphasized that while support may be visible, it does not always translate into openness or psychological safety. She observed, “The workplace feels open, although an established status quo is less likely to be challenged. Sometimes, it does not feel safe to open up about more personal struggles in coping.”

Since school management greatly influences teacher satisfaction (Mustaqim, 2021), Ann noted how leadership changes altered the overall climate of her work environment. She recounted, “...during my 3rd year, when we changed our supervisor in the program, I felt somehow productive because I felt like I was validated, rather than during my 1st-2nd year.”

These insights suggest that while peer support is essential, the quality of leadership and formal management systems remain equally vital in ensuring a safe, responsive, and encouraging workplace for novice teachers. A supportive system addresses everyday professional concerns and creates space for personal growth and well-being within demanding educational settings.

3.2.4. Balance Between Professional and Personal Life

Maintaining a balance between professional and personal life is crucial for the well-being of novice teachers, and many of them actively prioritize strategies to ensure their time remains protected despite the demands of their work (Phelps et al., 2024).

Arianne emphasizes this point by ensuring her personal life does not take a backseat as she pursues her profession. She shares, “I always ensure I do not compromise my personal life. I always ensure that at least one day a week is not about school.”

Grace echoes Arianne’s approach, stating, “...finding time for self-care and focusing on long-term goals.” Similarly, Megan highlights the importance of short breaks to recharge, saying, “Taking short breaks throughout the day to recharge, and talking to someone I trust with.” Athena also emphasizes the need to pause and recalibrate when tasks become overwhelming, noting, “I have learned to pause, organize my tasks, and ask for help when things get overwhelming.”

Beyond personal downtime, another key strategy is active task planning to manage work-life stress. Jane shares, “Planning my tasks includes incorporating more physical activity after work to help shift my focus away from work-related matters,” highlighting how physical activity can aid in mentally disengaging from work.

This resonates with Rina’s practice of avoiding work-related distractions outside of school: “I make a conscious decision not to bring my laptop home so that I am not constantly reminded of the heavy workload.”

In addition to these practical strategies, some teachers, like Helga, turn to spirituality to cope with the emotional demands of their work. She shares, “I do a lot of reflection and prayer. I journal with a system that allows me to keep track of the things in my life so I know what to prioritize.”

Figure 1 presents a diagram illustrating the meaningful categories and themes that emerged from the data analysis, offering a visual representation of the key ideas drawn from participant narratives.

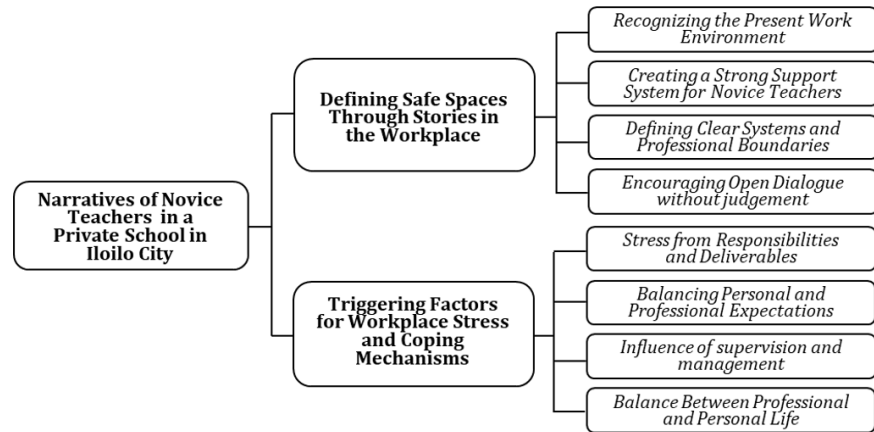


Figure 1. Meaningful categories and themes.

Ultimately, the participants’ insights point to the importance of cultivating a school culture that values open communication, workload balance, and emotional support for its teachers. When novice educators feel safe and supported, they are better equipped to navigate professional challenges and develop their skills effectively.

4. Discussion

This study explored the narratives of novice teachers in a private school in Iloilo City in terms of defining safe spaces, triggering factors for stress, and coping mechanisms in the workplace. The informants were probationary teachers – ranging from one to three years of teaching – across different units within the institution. Their accounts and experiences all contributed to understanding what a safe space is in an educational workplace, the stress triggers, and their corresponding coping mechanisms.

Acknowledging their current working conditions and the environment allowed the informants to characterize what safe spaces in the workplace would be for them. These novice teachers could define safe workplace spaces through the following meaningful categories: 1) recognizing their present work environment; 2) creating a strong support system for novice teachers; 3) defining clear systems and professional boundaries; and 4) encouraging open dialogue without judgement.

The findings of this study reveal that as novice teachers recognize their current working environment, it is challenging yet supportive (Phelps et al., 2024). Through this, most of the informants would agree that the general impression of their workplace is setting a high standard for work while providing a sense of support, leading to productive performance. This perspective aligns with the assertion of Damiao and Obaob (2020), who emphasize that teachers feel safer and more motivated in environments that foster positivity. This idea of a safe space extends beyond the confines of the classroom and into the broader work environment, encompassing emotional security, respect, and professional support.

Moreover, the narratives of novice teachers in this study revealed how feeling supported by colleagues and being heard contributed to their motivation and professional growth during their early years. This confirms that creating a strong support system for novice teachers significantly impacts the sense of being safe in the workplace, as mirrored in Baharuddin’s (2021) findings on the strong link between work environment and teacher performance. Saleem et al. (2022) also reinforce this idea, noting that social support from supervisors and peers can enhance employee self-efficacy and job performance.

The informants also expressed that to create safe workplace spaces; there must be a clear system and professional boundaries in place. These clear systems provide a form of reassurance to employees that processes are well-defined. Felisilda et al. (2024) highlight that a clear organizational system promotes better emotional well-being and nurtures a sense of belonging within professional communities. This idea is supported by Aakernes et al. (2023), who explain that while free spaces in academia are possible, institutions must intentionally embrace autonomy and self-reflection as essential parts of workplace culture.

The teacher-informants in this study expressed the importance of having a space to openly share concerns, admit honest mistakes, and receive constructive feedback without fear

of judgment. This is acknowledged by Bowman (2025), who notes that when educators feel valued and empowered to express themselves freely, both their job satisfaction and performance tend to improve significantly. However, the study of May (2022) emphasized the importance of establishing a flexible framework that enables novice teachers to navigate and reconcile their professional identities with the difficulties and pressures they encounter within their unique teaching environments. This idea of introspection reveals that teachers must also become self-aware of their tendencies and adjust to the set culture of their workplace.

Despite these affirming experiences, the study surfaced persistent stress triggers that affected the teachers' daily work experiences. The informants could also offer a view of coping with the underlying circumstances. These stress triggers and coping mechanisms were elucidated in the following subthemes: 1) stress from responsibilities and deliverables; 2) balancing personal and professional expectations; 3) influence of supervision and management; and 4) balance between professional and personal life.

Many identified excessive workloads – both stemming from overwhelming responsibilities and deliverables – as one of the main sources of triggering factors for work-related stress. Their narratives reveal that extracurricular and ancillary work, along with the demands of academic requirements, all contribute to stress within the workplace for novice teachers. This observation is supported by Zaini and Wahab (2024), who explain that early career teachers often feel overwhelmed by lesson planning, classroom management, administrative duties, and leadership demands.

Moreover, the informants also strongly expressed how administrative and supervisory influence are significant sources of pressure (Gray & Seiki, 2020). This idea is affirmed by Ryan and Cross (2024), who found that negative leadership styles lead to anxiety, disengagement, reduced productivity, and a toxic work environment driven by fear of mistakes and weak support for leadership. A few informants also described feeling closely monitored, with limited control over classroom decisions, contributing to feeling undervalued. Jin et al. (2022) further explain that the expectations placed on novice teachers regarding feedback quality emphasize the need for a more transparent and supportive professional development framework.

Furthermore, blurred work-life boundaries caused by extending school-related tasks beyond official hours added to their stress. Susanto et al. (2022) argue that work-life balance reflects how individuals manage both professional and personal responsibilities, suggesting it should be approached in a way that prevents conflicts or overlaps between these areas. The informants shared that although a sense of work-life balance is shared within the institution, there are still a few instances when the line between work and their personal lives gets blurry. This situation reflects the observations of Utami et al. (2021) and Mustaqim (2021), who emphasize that heavy workloads and overly controlling management approaches contribute to blurred boundaries, ultimately affecting employee morale and job satisfaction.

In response to these challenges, novice teachers demonstrated different coping strategies to maintain their well-being. Consistent with Cho et al. (2025), who highlight the value of leisure in managing work-related stress, many informants described setting boundaries between work and personal life. Reserving specific times for hobbies, physical activity, and quality time with loved ones became important ways to recharge emotionally. Odisa et al. (2021) support this finding, emphasizing that work-life balance can improve job performance and overall satisfaction. The teachers also leaned on trusted friends and mentors for emotional support, while some turned to spiritual practices, journaling, and quiet reflection to manage anxiety and prevent burnout.

The experiences of these novice teachers suggest that schools must foster a culture where open communication, fair workload distribution, and emotional support are embedded into daily practice. Agyapong et al. (2022) point out that social support is critical in reducing stress and promoting employee well-being within any organization. When novice educators feel emotionally secure and professionally valued, they are better positioned to manage workplace demands and grow confidently.

Although this study focused on a small group of novice teachers in a private school in Iloilo City and may not reflect the broader experiences of teachers in other settings, the insights remain valuable for school leadership. It is recommended that administrators acknowledge these stressors and actively work toward creating an environment where novice teachers feel heard, supported, and professionally respected. Clear communication, fair workload management, opportunities for peer collaboration, and respect for personal boundaries can contribute to a healthier, more supportive school culture that encourages

novice teachers to thrive in their careers.

5. Conclusions

This study reveals that for novice teachers, safe spaces in the workplace are closely connected to emotional security, mutual respect, and the freedom to navigate professional challenges without fear of judgment. Their ideas of safe spaces are shaped by their experiences in terms of supervisory and administrative handling, cultivation of a strong and healthy support system, and the ability to express their ideas or air out concerns within a system that honors transparency and promotes openness. For the novice teachers, they identified stress triggers can manifest in various workplace incidents, culture, or practice, such as administrative micromanagement, excessive workloads, unclear expectations, and blurred work-life boundaries as key concerns affecting their well-being and job engagement. These teachers have identified that these stress triggers negatively affect their well-being and job engagement. These stressors often arise from workplace incidents, prevailing culture, or institutional practices. Such conditions can lead to emotional exhaustion, reduced motivation, and uncertainty in professional identity. In coping with these challenges, they turned to work-life balance strategies, leisure activities, trusted social connections, and personal spiritual practices. These findings emphasize the need for school leaders to actively listen, acknowledge these stressors, and create emotionally supportive, collaborative, and respectful work environments where novice teachers can grow with confidence and security. In this specific context of novice teachers in a private school, it is imperative for the administrators to foster a nurturing relationship with their subordinates and maintain attainable professional standards at the same time. In this way, novice teachers may have an encouraging, safe ground to expand their skillsets, grow professionally, and explore their respective specialized area while continuously upholding the values of integrity, accountability, and high quality of instruction and professional obligations. Safe spaces are not merely physical areas but are experienced through everyday interactions, leadership practices, and the overall climate of the school. For these teachers, such spaces are shaped largely by how supervisors and administrators handle concerns, provide guidance, and exercise authority.

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