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**OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND BURNOUT AMONG CRISIS INTERVENTION  
EMPLOYEES: IMPLICATION TO ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUALS  
IN CRISIS SITUATION PROGRAM**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the levels of occupational stress and burnout among 100 Crisis Intervention Section (CIS) employees of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in Western Visayas. The study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design with a mixed-method approach. Data were gathered via digital surveys and analyzed using frequency, percentage, median, Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation, and Chi-square tests at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that the level of occupational stress was "Low" to "Moderate", while burnout levels were generally "Low". No significant difference was found in the levels of stress and burnout when classified according to profile variables except for educational attainment. A significant relationship was found between stress and burnout. Qualitative data analysis yielded themes such as compliance fatigue due to excessive paperwork, staffing shortages, and a lack of organizational recognition. Recommendations focused on streamlining AICS guidelines, institutionalizing psychological debriefing, and establishing mentorship programs to bridge the experience gap and ensure the long-term sustainability of crisis intervention efforts.

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**Keywords:** *Occupational Stress, Burnout, Crisis Intervention, AICS Program, DSWD, Social Welfare Officers*

## INTRODUCTION

The importance of mental health awareness, particularly in the context of occupational stress and burnout, is a globally recognized issue (International Labour Organization & World Health Organization, 2022; World Health Organization, 2024). It is particularly critical for professions involving direct and sustained exposure to human suffering, where the psychological toll on employees can be profound (Cocker & Joss, 2021; National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), 2023).

In the Philippines, this challenge is acutely felt within the public service, where government workers are at the forefront of responding to a wide array of social crises. According to 2024 study, workers in the Philippines are more physically and mentally exhausted than the people in most other countries, with burnout rates reaching as high as 70.71% (Frontiers in Public Health, 2024; Deloitte, 2024).

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is the primary government agency tasked with providing social protection and welfare programs, including immediate relief and assistance through its Crisis Intervention Section (CIS) program. The CIS frontline employees are routinely exposed to various emotionally challenging situations, such as financial difficulty, medical needs, disaster response, cases of abuse, and extreme poverty.

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This constant immersion in crisis places them at a high risk for developing work-related stress, compassion fatigue, and burnout.

Recognizing the impact of the workplace on mental health, the DSWD has taken proactive steps to address the welfare of its personnel. The agency has issued formal policies, such as the Mental Health Program for DSWD Personnel (DSWD Administrative Order 2021-005), which provides an institutional framework for Human Resource Management (HRM) to promote, protect, and treat employees' mental health.

It states that the impact of mental health problems in the workplace has serious consequences not only on the person as an individual, but also on the productivity of the organization as a whole. Poor performance, tardiness, accidents, absenteeism, illness and staff turnover can be associated with a personnel's mental health issues. Furthermore, the institutionalization of the WiSUPPORT Project (Wireless Mental Health and Psychosocial Support) reflects the DSWD's effort to provide online and technology-based support not only to clients but, importantly, to first responders and caregivers like the CIS personnel themselves.

While these policies demonstrate clear institutional commitment, their effectiveness in mitigating stress and burnout among the most vulnerable frontliners — the CIS employees— has yet to be fully explored. The high-stakes nature of their work presents a unique set of stressors that may not be fully addressed by generalized welfare programs. There is a need to move beyond policy and examine the lived experiences of these employees to understand the specific factors that contribute to their stress and burnout.

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Thus, this study aims to explore the levels of occupational stress and burnout among DSWD CIS employees in Western Visayas and to identify critical implications for the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS) Program.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Methodology

This chapter presents research design, research method, respondents of the study, sampling design, research instruments, data gathering procedure, and data analysis. The primary objective of this study was to investigate the level of occupational stress and burnout among Crisis Intervention Section (CIS) employees of Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in Western Visayas involved in Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS) Program.

### Research Method

The researcher utilized the survey approach with a questionnaire that included both closed and open-ended questions, facilitating the gathering of measurable data alongside detailed qualitative information (Pytcheva & Yan, 2025). The primary design for this study was survey research, as it effectively gathered the traits and viewpoints of a specific group, namely 100 DSWD Crisis Intervention Employees located within a certain geographical region (Creswell & Guetterman, 2024).

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## Research Design

This study employed a mixed-method research design, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches in generating data (Creswell & Guetterman, 2024). Specifically, it utilized a descriptive-correlational approach (Stratton, 2021) to determine the perceived level of occupational stress and examine the relationship between variables among DSWD Crisis Intervention employees.

The descriptive aspect was utilized to outline the demographic profile of the DSWD CIS personnel in Western Visayas, and to assess the perceived degrees of occupational stress and burnout. It outlined the major sources of stress encountered by the workers.

The correlation investigated the connection between occupational stress levels and burnout in DSWD CIS Employees. It further investigated possible links between recognized stressors and the degrees of stress and burnout.

Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the qualitative data created via the operational definition in order to translate the data. This approach was employed as it provides a structured yet adaptable means of recognizing, examining, and documenting patterns (themes) present in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). By employing reflexive thematic analysis, the researcher can better explore the potential associations between identified stressors and the lived experiences of stress and burnout among DSWD employees, providing depth that quantitative data alone cannot capture (Byrne, 2022).

The research took place in the Field Office VI of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). This encompassed the Crisis Intervention Section (CIS) at the Regional

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Office in Iloilo City, the multiple Malasakit Centers situated in government hospitals, and the Social Welfare and Development Extension Offices (SWAD-EO) throughout the provinces of Aklan, Antique, Capiz, Guimaras, and Iloilo.

## Participants of the Study

The participants in this research comprise 100 employees engaged in crisis intervention tasks at the DSWD Crisis Intervention. This specific group was selected through purposive sampling to ensure that the participants possess the necessary expertise and lived experience regarding the AICS program implementation (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). By focusing on staff whose duties involved direct interaction with clients in crisis, the study ensured the collection of information-rich data relevant to occupational stress and burnout (Memon et al., 2025)

## Sampling Design

The research employed purposive sampling (a non-probability sampling method) to choose participants according to defined inclusion criteria. Participants were required to be current employees of DSWD Field Office VI. They must have had active service in the AICS program to ensure they had sufficient exposure to the work environment. As supported by Aguinis (2024) and Memon et al. (2025), these sources validated the rigor of purposive sampling in organizational and social welfare research, ensuring the sample was representative of the specific professional challenges faced by DSWD staff.

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## Research Instrument

The study used a mix of survey instruments composed of five parts: (1) Demographic profile (2) Occupational stress scale (3) Adaptation of the Maslach Burnout Inventory, (4) Sources of Stress Checklist and (5) Open-ended questions. Employing a modified multi-part tool was suitable for measuring intricate psychological constructs in a particular organizational context (Boateng et al., 2024).

The researcher formulated the instrument and consulted the research adviser for comments and suggestions. Afterward, the interview schedule was pretested and validated before being posted on Messenger.

The research instrument contained several parts.

The first section of the survey outlined the demographic profile. This part collected data on the age, gender, marital status, years of employment, level of education, and job roles of the participants.

Section Two of the tool employed the Perceived Occupational Stress Scale. This part assessed the degree of work-related stress. A suitable scale was adapted or developed for this purpose, using a Likert-type scale (e.g., 1 = Never, 5 = Always). This section included items related to workload, time pressure, role ambiguity, and resource inadequacy.

The third part utilized the Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey (MBI-GS) or MBI-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS) (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996; Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach, & Jackson, 1996). This commonly utilized and verified tool is used to assess the three aspects of burnout: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal

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Accomplishment. Participants evaluated each item using a frequency scale (e.g., 1 = Never, 5 = Everyday).

Part Four of the survey consisted of a self-developed Sources of Stress Checklist. This section listed potential stressors relevant to DSWD CIS work (e.g., exposure to traumatic events, heavy caseload, lack of adequate training, difficult clients, limited resources, bureaucratic hurdles, lack of recognition, work-life imbalance). Respondents were encouraged to choose the extent to which each factor contributes to their stress or indicate its presence.

The last part of the tool comprised open-ended questions. To collect qualitative insights and enable respondents to voice issues not addressed by the structured questions, several open-ended questions were added, including "What do you consider the most challenging aspect of your work in CIS?" and "What support do you think is most necessary to manage work-related stress?".

### **Validity of the Research Instrument**

The research tool, particularly the survey questionnaire, was sent for content validation to confirm the accuracy of the study's results. The research adviser received the draft questionnaire for approval. It was subsequently submitted to a panel of specialists for revisions, advice, and recommendations prior to the implementation of reliability testing.

### **Data Gathering Procedures**

The process of collecting data adhered to an organized approach and ethical protocol to ensure compliance with both academic and institutional standards. The researcher first obtained approval for the research plan from the research adviser, then submitted a formal

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request for permission to the Dean of the Graduate School at PHINMA-University of Iloilo.

After receiving academic clearance, a formal request letter was sent to the DSWD Regional Director (RD) via the Policy Development and Planning Section of the Policy and Plan Division at DSWD Field Office VI.

In compliance with the department's specialized research protocols, the researcher completed the mandatory digital registration via Google Forms, which involved uploading the approved research proposal and the validated survey instruments in PDF format. This stage also included the accomplishment of official DSWD research forms, specifically GF-003 (Research Management and Completion Form) and GF-004 (Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Agreement). Following a thorough institutional assessment, the request was endorsed to the Protective Services Division (PSD) and subsequently to the Crisis Intervention Section (CIS) for final implementation.

Once institutional access was granted, the researcher coordinated with the Human Resource Management Office to identify eligible respondents based on the inclusion criteria. The survey was administered using a hybrid approach: printed questionnaires were distributed to staff at the Regional Office in Iloilo City, while Google Forms were used for employees stationed in Satellite offices and Malasakit Centers across the provinces of Aklan, Antique, Capiz, and Guimaras.

To maintain ethical standards, each participant received an Informed Consent Form before taking part. This document outlined the aims of the study, the voluntary aspect of their participation, and a promise of anonymity and confidentiality in line with the Data Privacy Act

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of 2012. Data collection was conducted during the most convenient times for the respondents to avoid disrupting the essential services of the AICS program.

## Data Analyses

After the survey, the recorded data were checked for missing items. The researcher finalized the total number of respondents. The gathered data underwent analysis through suitable statistical methods with the support of statistical software (e.g., Statistical Package for the Social Sciences or SPSS).

The research employed a descriptive-correlational design featuring a mixed-method approach, utilizing frequency, percentage, median, Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation, and Chi-square tests at a significance level of 0.05. The analyzed data results were displayed in tables to make the outcome easier to comprehend.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study investigated the levels of occupational stress and burnout among 100 Crisis Intervention Section (CIS) employees of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in Western Visayas.

The study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design with a mixed-method approach.

The participants of the study were 100 employees from Crisis Intervention Section in the Department of Social Welfare and Development, Field Office VI.

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The research instrument utilized in the study was a researcher-made interview schedule via Google Form.

A panel of experts validated the interview schedule and considered all comments and suggestions relative to the validation of the tool.

A formal request letter was sent to the DSWD Regional Director (RD) via the Policy Development and Planning Section of the Policy and Plan Division at DSWD Field Office VI. Permits from the individual participants were obtained to allow the researcher to conduct the study. The information gathered was analyzed using descriptive-correlation and thematic approach.

The following are the findings of the study:

This research focused on examining the degree of occupational stress and burnout experienced by Crisis Intervention Employees of the Department of Social Welfare and Development participating in the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis (AICS) Program. It also assessed whether significant connections exist between these variables and highlighted the challenges and consequences of the results for CIS personnel.

A descriptive-correlational research design with a mixed-method approach was used. A total of 100 CIS employees were selected through purposive sampling. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, median, and rank were used to describe the data. Inferential statistical tools, including Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation and Chi square, were applied at a 0.05 level of significance.

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The research examined the job-related stress and burnout levels among 100 DSWD CIS staff in Western Visayas, uncovering a demographic profile that was mainly young, female, and unmarried. This workforce exhibited a relatively short tenure, having worked six years or fewer, but they were well-qualified, predominantly holding a bachelor's degree, mainly as Social Welfare Officers.

Regarding psychological well-being, the general perceived level of work-related stress was classified as "Low" to "Moderate." While most groups reported low stress, specific cohorts—including male employees, separated individuals, those with over seven years of service, and Administrative/Project staff—experienced "Moderate" stress levels.

Similarly, while general burnout levels remained "Low", institutional risks were evident as females and married staff reported "Moderate" burnout, and separated individuals reached "High" burnout levels. Notably, Social Welfare Officers faced "Moderate" burnout, contrasting with the lower levels reported by their administrative counterparts.

Statistical analysis highlighted that educational attainment was the only profile variable showing a statistically significant difference ( $p = 0.020$ ) in occupational stress levels.

Conversely, no demographic variables showed a significant difference regarding burnout, which suggested a uniform experience of exhaustion across the section regardless of personal profile.

A notable moderate positive correlation ( $r = 0.516$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) was discovered between the two key variables, indicating that as job-related stress rises, burnout levels also escalate.

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Finally, the Pareto analysis identified four key stressors driving these results: client aggression or difficult cases, high caseloads, lack of clear guidelines, and unpredictable work hours. These were the primary challenges experienced by staff during the implementation of the program.

## Conclusion

The study's findings indicate that the demographic profile of the Crisis Intervention Section (CIS) shows a highly fragile workforce marked by youth, elevated educational levels, and short tenure. The predominance of employees with six years of service or less suggested a significant mentorship gap within the agency. While these employees possessed the academic qualifications necessary for the role, they might lack the long-term, seasoned coping mechanisms required to sustain the high intensity demands of the AICS program indefinitely.

Concerning mental well-being, the indicated "Low" to "Moderate" degrees of work-related stress and exhaustion implied a Resilience Paradox. While employees appear to be managing the current workload, the transition to "Moderate" stress for those with over seven years of service indicated that the daily pressure was cumulative. Furthermore, the "Moderate" to "High" burnout levels among female, married, and separated staff highlighted a gendered and social burden, where the lack of external emotional buffering or the presence of "double-burden" responsibilities significantly depleted an employee's professional reserve.

The statistical significance of educational attainment as the sole driver of occupational stress suggested a mismatch between professional expectations and administrative reality. Highly educated professionals in the CIS likely experience cognitive friction when their

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specialized training was overshadowed by the "Vital Four" systemic stressors: client aggression, high caseloads, unclear guidelines, and unpredictable work hours. The significant moderate positive correlation ( $r = 0.516$ ) between stress and burnout confirmed that these two variables were not independent; rather, occupational stress serves as the primary catalyst for long-term emotional collapse. If the systemic drivers, particularly the lack of clear guidelines and high caseloads were not properly resolved, the current "Low" burnout levels were likely to escalate as the young workforce hits the "7-year plateau".

Ultimately, the study concluded that while CIS employees were resilient, their well-being was under threat from institutional and systemic friction rather than just client-related trauma. The stability of the AICS program depends not only on the dedication of its staff but on the agency's ability to streamline bureaucratic processes and provide robust psychological and administrative support systems.

In light of the mentioned implications, the following suggestions are proposed for the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), particularly the Crisis Intervention Section (CIS), to establish a thorough Employee Well-being and Resilience Program. This program should move beyond traditional team building to focus on Trauma-Informed Care for Staff, providing regular psychological debriefing and ventilation sessions to help employees process the emotional weight of client aggression and traumatic narratives. To address the mentorship gap identified among the predominantly young workforce, a structured Peer-Mentoring Framework should be established, pairing veteran employees with newer staff to

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share proven coping mechanisms and navigate the 7-year plateau where stress typically transitions into burnout.

Furthermore, the agency must take immediate steps to reduce systemic friction by streamlining the AICS Program guidelines and providing clear, simplified manuals, along with standardized Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), which could reduce cognitive load and the fear of making mistakes. To manage the "Vital Four" stressors—specifically high caseloads and unpredictable work hours, management should explore flexible scheduling and "administrative recovery days", allowing front-line workers a temporary reprieve from direct client interaction to focus on documentation. For vulnerable cohorts, such as female and separated employees who reported higher levels of exhaustion, the institution should implement gender-responsive support, such as enhanced childcare assistance or localized wellness forums, to alleviate the double-burden of professional and domestic responsibilities.

Finally, for Public Managers and Future Researchers, it is recommended to adopt a participative management style where CIS staff are involved in the decision-making processes regarding program implementation. This transparency fosters trust and reduces the feeling of being undervalued reported by administrative personnel.

Subsequent research ought to emphasize a long-term observation of this emerging workforce to ascertain whether these "Low" stress levels endure as they accumulate more experience and potentially broaden the investigation to additional areas to analyze how varying bureaucratic settings affect the link between job stress and clinical burnout.

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