

Stress Management Practices: Its Influence on Teachers' Performance and Classroom Effectiveness in the Province of Bukidnon

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between stress management practices and teachers' performance and classroom effectiveness among public elementary school teachers in Bukidnon, Philippines. Anchored in the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, the study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational design involving 100 teachers from four districts in Damulog and Kadingilan, selected through quota sampling. Data were collected using a researcher-made, four-point Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using means, standard deviations, and Spearman's rank correlation. Findings indicated favorable perceptions of mindfulness-based stress reduction practices, including meditation and breathing exercises ($M = 3.21$), perceived stress reduction ($M = 3.19$), emotional regulation ($M = 3.22$), and overall well-being ($M = 3.23$). Problem-solving skills obtained the highest mean among cognitive-behavioral strategies ($M = 3.32$). Teachers also reported favorable instructional quality ($M = 3.25$), classroom management ($M = 3.11$), student engagement ($M = 3.13$), and assessment and feedback ($M = 3.26$). Significant positive relationships were observed between cognitive reframing and student engagement ($r_s = 0.6782$, $p < 0.001$) and between problem-solving skills and assessment and feedback ($r_s = 0.6307$, $p < 0.001$). However, monitoring negative thoughts was not significantly associated with instructional quality or classroom management. The study concluded that cognitive-behavioral strategies were positively associated with several dimensions of classroom effectiveness and recommended integrating stress management workshops, reflective practices, and collaborative teaching approaches into professional development programs. The findings support Sustainable Development Goals 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), 4 (Quality Education), and 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). The study contributes to institutional and educational sustainability by providing evidence to inform teacher wellness initiatives, strengthen professional support systems, and sustain effective teaching practices in rural schools.

Keywords: Classroom Effectiveness; Cognitive-Behavioral Strategies; Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction; Problem-Solving Skills; Stress Management Practices; Teacher Well-Being; Teachers' Performance

1. Introduction

Teaching is a demanding profession that exposes educators to occupational stress, emotional exhaustion, and burnout, potentially affecting their professional performance and classroom effectiveness. Similarly, (Agyapong, Obuobi-Donkor, Burbach, & Wei, 2022) associated occupational stress with anxiety, depression, and burnout. These concerns highlight the importance of effective stress management practices in maintaining teachers' psychological well-being and professional competence (Westphal et al., 2022; Wettstein et al., 2021).

This study examined the relationship between stress management practices and teachers' performance and classroom effectiveness among public elementary school teachers in Bukidnon, Philippines. Specifically, it focused on mindfulness-based stress reduction and cognitive-behavioral strategies in relation to instructional quality, classroom management, student engagement, and assessment and feedback. Using a descriptive-correlational design, the study sought to provide evidence that could inform teacher wellness programs and institutional support initiatives.

Occupational stress affects teachers' emotional stability, job satisfaction, and ability to perform instructional responsibilities (Li, 2021). Shukla et al. (2021) reported that teacher stress prevalence ranged from 8.3% to 87.1%, while burnout affected 25.1% to 74.0% of educators. associated occupational stress with absenteeism and reduced job satisfaction, while Vallejos (2022) emphasized the importance of stress management in sustaining teachers' professional effectiveness. In rural educational settings, teachers may experience additional pressures arising from transportation difficulties, geographical isolation, workload demands, and limited parental involvement. These challenges underscore the importance of examining stress management practices within the specific circumstances of public elementary schools in Bukidnon.

Mindfulness-based stress reduction and cognitive-behavioral strategies are important approaches to managing teachers' occupational stress (Beames et al., 2023; Li et al., 2023). Mindfulness practices promote emotional awareness, relaxation, and resilience (Hidajat et al., 2023; Phan et al., 2022). (2021) associated mindfulness interventions with reduced stress and emotional exhaustion.

Teachers' performance and classroom effectiveness encompass instructional quality, classroom management, student engagement, and assessment and feedback. Effective stress management may support these dimensions by strengthening teachers' emotional stability and professional responsiveness (Carroll et al., 2021). In the Philippines, Republic Act No. 11036, or the Mental Health Act, and Civil Service Commission Memorandum Circular No. 04, s. 2020, provide policy support for workplace mental health initiatives. Jimenez (2021) emphasized the relevance of these provisions to employee well-being. Within Bukidnon, geographical and community-related challenges further highlight the importance of examining stress management among public elementary school teachers.

The study was anchored in the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping developed by Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman in 1984. The theory explains stress through cognitive appraisal and coping responses, emphasizing how individuals interpret stressful situations and evaluate their capacity to manage them. Applied to education, it provides a basis for understanding teachers' responses to workload, classroom challenges, and professional demands. The conceptual framework identified mindfulness-based stress reduction and cognitive-behavioral strategies as independent variables. Mindfulness-based stress reduction included meditation and breathing exercises, perceived stress reduction, emotional regulation, and overall well-being. Cognitive-behavioral strategies included cognitive reframing, problem-solving skills, self-reflection practices, and monitoring negative thoughts. The dependent variable was teachers' performance and classroom effectiveness, measured through instructional quality, classroom management, student engagement, and assessment and feedback. The framework guided the examination of relationships between stress management practices and professional teaching outcomes.

Although previous studies have examined occupational stress and coping practices among teachers, limited attention has been given to stress management in rural educational settings, particularly communities experiencing geographical isolation, transportation difficulties, and limited parental participation. The original literature also identified insufficient longitudinal evidence concerning the sustained effects of stress management practices on teachers' performance and student outcomes. To address these contextual gaps, the study employed a descriptive-correlational design involving 100 public elementary school teachers, particularly in the districts of Kibawe and Kadingilan, Bukidnon. It assessed mindfulness-based stress reduction, cognitive-behavioral strategies, and teachers' performance and classroom effectiveness, with particular emphasis on the relationship between cognitive-behavioral strategies and teaching outcomes.

SDG 3 was reflected in its emphasis on psychological well-being, emotional regulation, and occupational stress management. SDG 4 was addressed through the examination of instructional quality, classroom management, student engagement, and assessment and feedback. SDG 8 was relevant to promoting supportive working conditions and professional well-being among educators. By examining stress management practices and their relationships with classroom effectiveness, the study provided a basis for supporting teacher wellness, maintaining educational quality, and strengthening sustainable professional working environments.

The study contributed to public health, educational, socio-economic, and institutional sustainability by emphasizing the relationship between teachers' psychological well-being and professional effectiveness. From a public health perspective, it highlighted coping strategies that may support emotional resilience. From an educational perspective, it examined practices associated with instructional quality and effective classroom

environments. Its socio-economic relevance concerned the importance of sustaining educational services in rural communities, while its institutional significance involved informing teacher wellness policies, professional development, and support programs. The findings could assist the Department of Education, school administrators, municipal school boards, and local government officials in developing context-sensitive initiatives that address teachers' professional and psychological needs.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive-correlational design to describe the levels of mindfulness-based stress reduction, cognitive-behavioral strategies, and teachers' performance and classroom effectiveness and to examine relationships among these variables. This design enabled the examination of stress management practices and their relationship with teachers' professional performance without manipulating the variables.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in four public elementary school districts within the Division of Bukidnon, particularly in the municipalities of Damulog and Kadingilan, Southern Bukidnon, Philippines. These municipalities are situated near the provincial boundary with North Cotabato. Damulog borders North Cotabato, while Kibawe is approximately 12 kilometers from Damulog. The geographical distribution of the research locale is illustrated in Figure 1, showing the location of the participating municipalities within Bukidnon and providing geographical context for the selected educational settings.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents comprised 100 classroom teachers from four districts in Damulog and Kadingilan, Bukidnon. As presented in Table 1, Damulog South District and Damulog North District each contributed 25 respondents, while Kadingilan 1 District and Kadingilan 2 District also contributed 25 respondents each. The equal allocation resulted in 50 respondents from each municipality, ensuring balanced district representation and incorporating teachers from different educational environments and professional backgrounds.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study employed quota sampling to select 100 classroom teachers from the four participating districts, with 25 respondents allocated to each district. Participants were selected according to teaching experience, school type, and educational background. This sampling procedure ensured equal representation across districts while capturing diverse professional experiences and educational settings relevant to the study.

2.5 Research Instrument

A researcher-made questionnaire consisting of three components was utilized to collect data. The first component measured mindfulness-based stress reduction using a four-point Likert scale, while the second assessed cognitive-behavioral strategies using the same scale. The third component evaluated teachers' performance and classroom effectiveness. The questionnaire provided quantitative data for describing the study variables and examining their relationships.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher initially secured permission from the Schools Division Superintendent of Bukidnon to conduct the study. Following approval, official communications were forwarded to the Public Schools District Supervisors or District In-Charge of the participating districts to facilitate coordination and respondent participation. The questionnaires were personally distributed to the selected classroom teachers after explaining the study's purpose and significance. Completed questionnaires were subsequently retrieved, organized, and coded for statistical analysis.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean and standard deviation were employed to address the first three research problems by describing the levels of mindfulness-based stress reduction, cognitive-behavioral strategies, and teachers' performance and classroom effectiveness. Mean scores were interpreted using the four-point Likert scale, while standard deviations measured variations in responses.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Practices Among Teachers

3.1.1 Meditation and Breathing Exercises

The respondents generally agreed that meditation and breathing exercises contributed to stress management ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.62$). Deep breathing received the highest ratings for improving mood ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 0.66$) and managing anger or frustration ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 0.06$). Regular meditation for improving focus and clarity received

the lowest rating ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 0.78$), although respondents still agreed with its benefits. These findings indicate that teachers perceived deep breathing as particularly useful for immediate emotional regulation, while meditation-related concentration benefits received comparatively lower ratings.

3.1.2 Perceived Stress Reduction

Perceived stress reduction obtained an overall mean of 3.19 ($SD = 0.62$), indicating agreement among respondents. Work-life balance and seeking support from friends or family received the highest ratings ($M = 3.30$ for both), while physical activity as a stress-relieving practice received the lowest rating ($M = 3.03$). Respondents also agreed that effective stress management improved productivity and reduced perceived stress over time ($M = 3.16$ for both). The results highlight the importance of social support and work-life balance in managing occupational stress. These findings suggest the value of supportive workplace environments and personal coping practices.

3.1.3 Emotional Regulation

Emotional regulation recorded an overall mean of 3.22 ($SD = 0.74$), interpreted as agreement. Respondents strongly agreed that regulating emotions improved interpersonal relationships ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 0.67$) and that seeking professional assistance was important when experiencing emotional challenges ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 0.70$). Constructive emotional expression through activities such as art or writing received the lowest rating ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.84$). These findings indicate that teachers recognized emotional regulation as important for healthy communication and psychological well-being. The findings underscore the relevance of emotional awareness and accessible support in managing professional stress.

3.1.4 Overall Well-Being

Overall well-being obtained a mean of 3.23 ($SD = 0.70$), indicating agreement. Celebrating personal achievements received the highest rating ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 0.76$), followed by engaging in hobbies ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 0.60$). Maintaining a positive outlook despite challenges received the lowest rating ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 0.73$). The results suggest that recognizing accomplishments and participating in enjoyable activities were valued aspects of teachers' well-being. These findings emphasize the importance of balancing professional responsibilities with personal fulfillment.

3.2 Cognitive-Behavioral Stress Management Strategies Among Teachers

3.2.1 Cognitive Reframing

Cognitive reframing obtained an overall mean of 3.17 ($SD = 0.56$), indicating agreement. Focusing on solutions rather than problems received the highest rating ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 0.68$), followed by celebrating small victories ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 0.61$). Positive affirmations to counter negative self-talk received the lowest rating ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 0.74$). The findings suggest that teachers valued solution-oriented thinking and recognition of progress as coping strategies. Similarly associated cognitive reframing with reduced anxiety and improved psychological well-being. These findings support the relevance of constructive thinking in managing stressful experiences.

3.2.2 Problem-Solving Skills

Problem-solving skills received the highest overall rating among the cognitive-behavioral dimensions ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 0.70$), interpreted as strongly agree. Patience and flexibility obtained the highest mean ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 0.69$), followed by prioritizing solutions ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 0.60$). Seeking input from others received the lowest mean ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 0.71$), although it remained positively rated. These findings demonstrate the importance respondents placed on flexibility, patience, and solution-focused responses when addressing challenges. The results highlight problem-solving as a prominent dimension of teachers' cognitive-behavioral coping practices.

3.2.3 Self-Reflection Practices

Self-reflection practices recorded an overall mean of 3.23 ($SD = 0.66$), indicating agreement. Discussions with trusted friends received the highest rating ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 0.52$), followed by identifying behavioral patterns through reflection ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 0.64$). Openness to feedback received the lowest rating ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 0.67$).

3.2.4 Monitoring Negative Thoughts

Monitoring negative thoughts obtained an overall mean of 3.25 ($SD = 0.62$), indicating agreement. Positive self-talk received the highest rating ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 0.66$), followed by taking control of negative thoughts ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 0.54$). Taking breaks from social media to reduce negativity received the lowest rating ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 0.54$). The findings suggest that respondents valued positive self-talk and thought management as strategies for maintaining emotional stability. These findings support the importance of constructive self-directed thinking in stress management.

3.3 Teachers' Performance and Classroom Effectiveness

3.3.1 Instructional Quality

Instructional quality obtained an overall mean of 3.25 ($SD = 0.66$), indicating agreement. Using varied teaching strategies received the highest rating ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.58$), followed by collaboration in developing instructional

materials ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 0.75$). Using student feedback to improve instruction received the lowest rating ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.67$). The findings emphasize teachers' recognition of instructional diversity and collaboration as important aspects of effective teaching. The comparatively lower rating for student feedback suggests an area for strengthening reflective instructional practices.

3.3.2 Classroom Management

Classroom management recorded an overall mean of 3.11 ($SD = 0.66$), indicating agreement. Involving students in establishing classroom norms received the highest rating ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 0.58$), followed by reflecting on classroom management practices ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 0.60$). Regular communication with students regarding behavior and progress received the lowest rating ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 0.63$). The results highlight the importance of student participation and reflective classroom management. The findings suggest that consistent communication and clearly established expectations remain important considerations for classroom effectiveness.

3.3.3 Student Engagement

Student engagement obtained an overall mean of 3.13 ($SD = 0.70$), indicating agreement. Using varied instructional materials received the highest rating ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.64$), followed by providing challenging but achievable learning tasks ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 0.67$). Technology integration received the lowest rating ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 0.73$). These findings indicate that teachers recognized diverse instructional materials and appropriately challenging activities as important for student participation. The comparatively lower rating for technology integration highlights an aspect of instructional practice that may require further attention.

3.3.4 Assessment and Feedback

Assessment and feedback recorded an overall mean of 3.26 ($SD = 0.72$), indicating agreement. Using varied assessment methods received the highest rating ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 0.75$), followed by providing opportunities for students to ask questions about feedback ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 0.74$). Adjusting instruction based on assessment results and encouraging student self-assessment both obtained a mean of 3.28. Using rubrics to clarify performance expectations received the lowest rating ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 0.74$). The findings indicate that teachers valued diverse assessment approaches and open communication in supporting student learning. The results emphasize the importance of assessment practices that accommodate learning differences and encourage students to participate actively in evaluating their progress.

3.4 Relationship Between Cognitive-Behavioral Strategies and Teachers' Performance and Classroom Effectiveness

3.4.1 Cognitive-Behavioral Strategies and Instructional Quality

Spearman's rank correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between instructional quality and cognitive reframing ($r_s = 0.3968$, $p < 0.001$), problem-solving skills ($r_s = 0.4194$, $p < 0.001$), and self-reflection practices ($r_s = 0.2321$, $p = 0.0201$). Monitoring negative thoughts showed a weak, statistically nonsignificant relationship ($r_s = 0.1005$, $p = 0.3198$). These findings indicate that problem-solving skills and cognitive reframing had comparatively stronger associations with instructional quality. Teachers who reported greater use of these strategies also tended to report more favorable instructional practices. However, monitoring negative thoughts was not significantly associated with instructional quality, indicating that not all cognitive-behavioral dimensions demonstrated statistically significant relationships with this outcome.

3.4.2 Cognitive-Behavioral Strategies and Classroom Management

Classroom management demonstrated significant positive correlations with cognitive reframing ($r_s = 0.3420$, $p = 0.0005$), problem-solving skills ($r_s = 0.2301$, $p = 0.0213$), and self-reflection practices ($r_s = 0.3759$, $p = 0.0001$). Monitoring negative thoughts showed a positive but statistically nonsignificant relationship ($r_s = 0.1893$, $p = 0.0592$). The findings suggest that self-reflection and cognitive reframing were particularly relevant to classroom management. Teachers who reported greater engagement in reflective and constructive thinking practices also tended to report more favorable classroom management outcomes. Nevertheless, the nonsignificant association involving monitoring negative thoughts indicates that its relationship with classroom management was not sufficiently supported by the statistical evidence.

3.4.3 Cognitive-Behavioral Strategies and Student Engagement

Student engagement showed significant positive correlations with all four cognitive-behavioral strategies. Cognitive reframing demonstrated the strongest relationship ($r_s = 0.6782$, $p < 0.001$), followed by monitoring negative thoughts ($r_s = 0.4826$, $p < 0.001$), self-reflection practices ($r_s = 0.4256$, $p < 0.001$), and problem-solving skills ($r_s = 0.2142$, $p = 0.0323$). These results indicate that cognitive reframing had the strongest association with student engagement among the strategies examined. The positive correlations suggest that teachers reporting greater use of constructive thinking, self-reflection, and thought management also tended to report higher student engagement. However, these relationships do not establish that cognitive-behavioral strategies directly caused improvements in student participation.

3.4.4 Cognitive-Behavioral Strategies and Assessment and Feedback

Assessment and feedback demonstrated significant positive relationships with problem-solving skills ($r_s = 0.6307$, $p < 0.001$), cognitive reframing ($r_s = 0.3784$, $p = 0.0001$), self-reflection practices ($r_s = 0.3113$, $p = 0.0016$), and monitoring negative thoughts ($r_s = 0.2661$, $p = 0.0074$). Problem-solving skills exhibited the strongest correlation among the four strategies. The findings suggest that problem-solving skills were particularly associated with teachers' assessment and feedback practices. Teachers who reported stronger problem-solving skills also tended to report more favorable assessment practices. Cognitive reframing, self-reflection, and monitoring negative thoughts likewise demonstrated significant positive associations, highlighting the relevance of cognitive-behavioral practices to this dimension of classroom effectiveness.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concluded that mindfulness-based stress reduction and cognitive-behavioral strategies are important practices for supporting teachers' psychological well-being and classroom effectiveness. Meditation, breathing exercises, emotional regulation, and positive coping practices were positively perceived by teachers, while cognitive reframing, problem-solving skills, self-reflection, and monitoring negative thoughts contributed to their reported stress management practices. The findings further emphasized the importance of diverse instructional strategies, teacher collaboration, student participation, and effective classroom management in promoting instructional quality and student engagement. Significant positive correlations were identified between cognitive-behavioral strategies and several dimensions of teachers' performance, particularly cognitive reframing and problem-solving skills. These findings highlight the relevance of integrating stress management and cognitive-behavioral approaches into teacher professional development to support well-being and effective classroom practices.

Based on the findings, schools and educational administrators are encouraged to implement regular workshops on meditation, breathing exercises, and stress management while promoting activities that recognize teachers' achievements and support personal well-being. Teacher training and professional development programs should incorporate cognitive reframing, problem-solving skills, self-reflection, and strategies for managing negative thoughts to strengthen emotional resilience and professional functioning. Schools should also encourage collaborative teaching practices, diverse instructional approaches, student participation in establishing classroom norms, and effective peer teaching strategies. Integrating these practices into existing professional development initiatives may support teachers' stress management, instructional quality, classroom management, and student engagement.

The study was limited to 100 classroom teachers from four selected districts in the municipalities of Damulog and Kadingilan, Bukidnon, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other educational settings. Its descriptive-correlational design established relationships between stress management practices and teachers' performance and classroom effectiveness but did not determine causal effects. Furthermore, the use of a researcher-made, self-report questionnaire may have introduced response bias and reflected teachers' perceptions rather than independently observed classroom performance. These methodological and contextual limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings and applying them to broader educational populations.

5. Compliance with ethical standards

The author acknowledges the participation of 100 public elementary school teachers from four districts in Damulog and Kadingilan, Bukidnon, Philippines, and the institutional cooperation of the Department of Education, Division of Bukidnon. Data were collected through non-invasive, researcher-administered questionnaires following authorization from the Schools Division Superintendent. Voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality safeguards require confirmation from the researchers before they can be formally declared. The authors' conflict of interest and external funding declarations likewise remain subject to confirmation.

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