



Breaking the Silence: A Phenomenological Study on the Mental Health Concerns on Teachers in the Modern Educational Landscape

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ABSTRACT

The mental well-being of teachers plays a vital role in today's educational landscape, as it significantly affects not only their personal health but also their ability to deliver effective instruction and foster a nurturing, supportive learning environment for students. This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights of six public elementary school teachers in New Bataan District, Davao de Oro, during the school year 2024–2025, in relation to their mental health concerns. Using in-depth interviews, the study sought to understand how teachers navigate the emotional, psychological, and social dimensions of their mental well-being amidst the demands of the modern educational landscape. Findings revealed that teachers face a range of mental health challenges, including anxiety, burnout, emotional exhaustion, and stress, often triggered by heavy workloads, administrative tasks, classroom management difficulties, and external pressures from students, parents, and societal expectations. Also, personal life circumstances, such as financial struggles and family responsibilities, further compounded these issues. Findings also indicated that barriers to seeking help included stigma, fear of judgment, and introverted tendencies. To cope, teachers employed strategies such as time management, setting boundaries, engaging in self-care, seeking peer and family support, and participating in professional development. Moreover, peer support networks and school-based mental health programs were found to be helpful but often limited in scope and consistency. Teachers emphasized the importance of empathy, open communication, and institutional support in fostering a mentally healthy school culture. With the findings, it is recommended that educational institutions prioritize mental health by providing comprehensive support systems, regular training, and accessible counseling services. Policies should be proactive, inclusive, and responsive to the real-world challenges faced by educators. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of teacher well-being and offer practical insights for improving mental health support in schools.

Keywords: educational administration, mental health, teachers, lived experiences, coping mechanisms, challenges, qualitative research, education, support systems, phenomenology

1. Introduction

1.1 Rationale

Teachers' mental health is crucial in today's education system, as it not only impacts their personal well-being but also influences how effectively they teach and create a positive, supportive atmosphere for students. However, many teachers are facing declining mental health, largely due to stress and burnout caused by heavy workloads, administrative responsibilities, and emotional challenges (Chakravarty, 2024).

In China, the frequent changes in regulations and the increasing amount of non-teaching tasks have led to higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among teachers (Yang, et al., 2019). This situation mirrors trends in other countries like the United Kingdom and the United States, where teachers are also struggling with mental health issues due to the pressures of the job and insufficient support systems (Woodberry, 2024).

In the Philippines, teachers face similar challenges, with stress, anxiety, and depression on the rise. These problems are worsened by increasing workloads, lack of support, and the demands of adapting to new teaching methods in the post-pandemic world. Filipino teachers have experienced stress and depression, which negatively impact their personal well-being and classroom performance (Simon & Mahinay, 2023).

In Davao de Oro, teachers are facing growing mental health challenges, such as stress and anxiety, which have worsened with the shift to blended learning and the ongoing pressures of the teaching profession. Many teachers are struggling to manage classroom behavior and meet the diverse needs of students, which leads to increased levels of anxiety and burnout (Homeo, 2023).

Several studies consistently highlight the worsening mental health of teachers, primarily due to stress, burnout, and anxiety. Despite previous studies conducted, key aspects of teachers' mental health still require exploration, particularly regarding stress from increasing workloads, classroom

management challenges, ancillary tasks, and abrupt reports. Additionally, there appears to be no research focused on the lived experiences, challenges, and coping strategies of teachers regarding their mental health concerns and issues, particularly in the local context of New Bataan District, Davao de Oro.

This research gap motivated the researcher to pursue this study, as there is a pressing need to address the mental health issues of teachers as this can negatively affect their credibility, teaching competence, and ultimately the student learning outcomes. As the focus on quality education intensifies, understanding teachers' mental health challenges becomes crucial. Research in this area can help address the difficulties teachers face, enhance the teaching-learning experience, and ensure their mental health concerns are properly addressed.

1.2 Research Questions

This phenomenological research aimed to explore the lived experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights of elementary teachers regarding their mental health concerns in the modern educational landscape in New Bataan District, Davao de Oro. Fundamentally, this study sought to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of teachers about their mental health concerns in the modern educational landscape?
2. What specific challenges do teachers face about their mental health?
3. How do teachers cope with the challenges of their mental health?
4. What are the insights of the teachers that can be shared with others who also experienced challenges in addressing mental health concerns?

1.3 Review of Related Literature

This section contains a detailed literature review section of the different studies that can be related to the research. The literature review provides a precise description and a concise review of the research outcomes and is used as a source of inspiration and direction for the study.

Mental Health. Mental health in education, especially for teachers, is becoming widely acknowledged as a key factor in maintaining a healthy learning environment. Teachers play a critical role in shaping their students' learning experiences, but they often face intense pressures like heavy workloads, difficult student behavior, and limited support. These challenges can lead to mental health problems such as anxiety and burnout, which not only affect the teachers themselves but also hinder the student's learning experience. Research has demonstrated that mentally healthy teachers are more effective in their roles, creating a more positive and productive atmosphere for students (Skobo, et. al., 2024).

Teachers' mental health plays a vital role in education, as it impacts not only their own well-being but also the academic success and emotional growth of their students. Teachers are often under considerable stress, which can result in burnout, anxiety, and depression, ultimately hindering their ability to teach effectively and meet their students' needs (Fang et al., 2023). Undeniably, a mentally healthy teaching staff helps create a nurturing school environment that boosts both student performance and mental health, positioning teachers as key drivers of positive change (Wang, 2023). Thus, supporting teachers' mental health is crucial for their well-being and for fostering a productive and supportive learning environment that benefits everyone in the school (Ma & Anto, 2022).

Christensen (2024) pointed out that one major challenge for teachers is the stigma around mental health. Many feel the need to appear strong and resilient, which often results in them neglecting their own mental health. This stigma makes it harder for teachers to seek help, potentially worsening their mental health struggles. Programs that raise awareness about mental health and provide school-based support can break down these barriers, which will encourage teachers to prioritize their well-being.

A good example of this is the introduction of mental health programs that address the needs of both teachers and students. Schools should recognize the value of supporting teachers' mental health alongside students'. This approach helps create an encouraging environment where teachers feel appreciated and empowered, which ultimately benefits student achievement. By including mental health training in professional development, schools can give teachers the skills they need to manage stress and foster well-being (Skobo et al., 2024).

In addition, focusing on teachers' mental health is crucial for improving the overall quality of education. Schools that invest in mental health initiatives not only offer support to their teachers but also boost student learning and growth. As research continues to show the close connection between teacher well-being and student success, it is clear that addressing mental health in education is a critical investment in the future of both teachers and students (Christensen, 2024).

Furthermore, Agyapong, et al. (2022) found that many teachers are experiencing high levels of burnout, stress, anxiety, and depression. Burnout is especially common, with estimates suggesting it affects between 25% and 74% of teachers. This is often a result of overwhelming workloads, emotional fatigue, and dissatisfaction with their jobs. Similarly, stress levels range widely, from 8.3% to 87.1%, as teachers are required to juggle challenging student behavior, demanding curricula, and administrative responsibilities.

More so, the COVID-19 pandemic has made these problems even worse, leading to a rise in anxiety and depression among teachers. In some cases, depression rates have been reported to reach as high as 77%. As schools adjust to a post-pandemic world, teachers are finding it even harder to manage both their own workloads and the mental health needs of their students (Ma et al., 2022).

Further, several external factors contribute to the decline in teachers' mental health, such as a lack of support from school administrations, and limited time to help students with their emotional challenges. Teachers often feel overwhelmed by the expectation to not only teach but also to provide emotional support for students dealing with mental health issues. This emotional burden, combined with inadequate professional support, results in chronic stress and burnout, ultimately reducing job satisfaction and effectiveness. As the need for teacher well-being becomes more pressing, schools and institutions must prioritize providing mental health resources and fostering supportive environments to prevent further deterioration (Fang et al., 2023).

Specifically, teachers in the modern educational landscape face numerous mental health challenges including burnout, anxiety, depression, handling student mental health issues, and post-pandemic stress (Agyapong, et al., 2022; Corrente, et al., 2022; Deaton, et al, 2022).

Teacher burnout is a serious and growing concern in today's education system. Several factors contribute to this, including heavy workloads, inadequate resources, emotional exhaustion, and the constant pressure to meet academic goals. Research shows that burnout among teachers ranges from 25% to 74%, with emotional exhaustion being a key symptom (Agyapong et al., 2022). Teachers handling large class sizes, grading numerous assignments, and adapting to new technologies—especially during the shift to online learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic—have experienced high levels of stress and fatigue (James, 2024).

The impact of burnout is broad, affecting teachers' job satisfaction, mental health, and even physical well-being. Studies have revealed that nearly 44% of teachers report frequent burnout, a much higher rate compared to other professions (James, 2024). Those experiencing burnout often feel detached, losing connection with both students and fellow teachers. These challenges highlight the urgent need for educational reforms, including better support systems and stress management programs to improve teachers' mental health and overall well-being (Agyapong, et al., 2024).

Anxiety is another major issue affecting teachers today, driven by factors such as technological advances, increased workloads, and evolving expectations. The rapid incorporation of technology into classrooms, though beneficial, has been a significant source of stress for many teachers. Teachers often feel overwhelmed by the need to learn new tools, manage online classes, and meet shifting educational standards, which heightens feelings of inadequacy and anxiety (Henderson & Corry, 2021). A study also found that teachers who switched to livestream teaching during the pandemic experienced even more anxiety due to their unfamiliarity with digital platforms and fear of not meeting expectations in a virtual setting (Liu, et al., 2022).

Moreover, beyond technology-related concerns, anxiety for teachers also stems from classroom behavior and administrative duties. This anxiety can negatively impact their mental health and job satisfaction, sometimes leading to burnout. Research suggests that anxiety may also hinder teachers' ability to embrace new technologies and teaching methods, which will affect their effectiveness and student engagement. Addressing these challenges requires systemic change, such as offering mental health support and professional development to help teachers transition more smoothly into today's educational environment (Adeyele, 2024).

Depression poses a significant mental health challenge for teachers in today's educational landscape. The relentless demands of classroom management, administrative responsibilities, and the need to adapt to shifting educational policies can leave teachers feeling overwhelmed, often resulting in depression. Research indicates that teachers experience higher rates of depression compared to other professionals, primarily due to job-related stress, lack of support, and the emotional burden of their work environment (Will, 2021). Symptoms of this condition often include fatigue, decreased motivation, and emotional exhaustion, all of which can negatively impact their teaching effectiveness and, consequently, student learning outcomes. Studies further reveal that teachers suffering from depression frequently report lower job satisfaction and a desire to leave the profession altogether (Harris & Moawad, 2023).

The repercussions of depression extend well beyond the classroom, influencing teachers' personal lives and overall well-being. Research found that the demanding nature of teaching, especially in challenging or under-resourced schools, puts teachers at a heightened risk for depression due to the emotional labor involved (Johansson, Falkstedt, & Almroth, 2022). Addressing this issue necessitates effective interventions, such as mental health support programs and strategies to reduce workload. Initiatives aimed at raising awareness within schools and facilitating access to professional mental health services can significantly help reduce the incidence of depression and enhance overall well-being among teachers (Agyapong et al., 2022).

Addressing the mental health challenges of students has increasingly become a major responsibility for teachers, who are often expected to provide emotional and psychological support alongside their teaching duties. Teachers frequently find themselves as the first line of support for students struggling with mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and behavioral disorders. Effectively managing these challenges while creating a conducive learning environment requires immense emotional resilience and patience. The dual role of teacher and emotional caregiver can lead to significant stress and burnout, especially since many teachers lack adequate training or support to navigate these complex issues (Agarwal, 2023).

Furthermore, the pressure to address students' mental health needs is especially pronounced in under-resourced schools, where access to professional counseling services may be limited. In these contexts, teachers are tasked with balancing their students' academic achievements and well-being without sufficient support systems. Research suggests that effectively managing teacher stress is vital for successfully addressing student mental health, as overwhelmed teachers may find it challenging to fulfill both their emotional and instructional duties. Consequently, cultivating a supportive culture that prioritizes teacher mental health is essential for enabling teachers to manage these demanding challenges effectively (Sparks, 2024).

Experiences and Circumstances that Contribute to Mental Health Concerns. Teachers play an indispensable role in shaping the future of communities, yet their own well-being is often overlooked. The teaching profession is inherently demanding, requiring teachers to juggle instructional responsibilities, administrative tasks, student engagement, and community expectations, all while adapting to rapid changes in educational policy and technology. This multidimensional workload, coupled with limited institutional support and recognition, places teachers at a heightened risk of mental health challenges. Issues such as chronic stress, burnout, and anxiety frequently stem from prolonged exposure to these pressures, especially when classroom behavior is difficult to manage or when school resources fall short of their needs (Sewell, 2024).

Beyond the demands of the classroom, many teachers also navigate external stressors that further impact their mental wellness. Balancing personal and familial obligations, enduring societal scrutiny, and responding to cultural or gender-based expectations can amplify their emotional burden. These overlapping responsibilities often create a sense of isolation and fatigue that, if unaddressed, may compromise their effectiveness and long-term engagement in the profession. Understanding these experiences and circumstances is critical not only to support teacher well-being but also to cultivate healthier, more resilient learning environments for both teachers and learners (Cammayo, et al., 2022).

Nwoko, et al. (2025) stated that teachers' mental health is significantly impacted by the heavy workload and time pressure inherent in their profession. Nearly twice as many teachers as other working adults experience frequent job-related stress, and three times as many struggle to cope with it. These extended hours are often consumed by lesson planning, grading, and preparing instructional materials, which teachers frequently complete outside of regular school hours. The imbalance between effort and compensation, combined with the emotional demands of teaching, creates a persistent strain on educators' mental well-being.

Moreover, administrative responsibilities further exacerbate teachers' mental health issues. Teachers are increasingly tasked with non-instructional duties such as attending meetings, completing compliance paperwork, and managing school-wide initiatives. These tasks often encroach on time meant for instructional planning or personal recovery, leading to a sense of professional inefficiency and emotional exhaustion. It was found that systemic changes, including reducing administrative burdens and offering more flexible scheduling, protect teachers' time and mental health (Nwoko, et al., 2025).

On the other hand, Corrente, et al. (2022) disclosed that the lack of adequate breaks during the school day compounds the stress teachers face. The authors found that teachers frequently skip breaks due to the demands of their workload, leading to physical and mental fatigue. Teachers often bring work home, sacrificing personal time to meet professional expectations. This constant pressure can result in burnout, low self-esteem, and diminished job performance. Without structural reforms to reduce workload and ensure adequate rest, teachers' well-being will continue to decline, ultimately affecting the quality of education delivered to students.

More so, teachers' mental health is deeply influenced by personal and social factors, particularly gender roles and expectations. Teaching is often perceived as a feminine profession, with women comprising the majority of the workforce, especially in elementary education. This gendered perception places additional emotional and caregiving expectations on female teachers, both within the classroom and at home. The intersection of professional and domestic caregiving responsibilities contributes to elevated stress levels and burnout among women teachers (Zissi, 2022).

Ferguson, et al. (2022) emphasized that family responsibilities further compound the mental health challenges faced by teachers. Over a quarter of teachers surveyed had taken a leave of absence due to stress, with the majority being women. Many female teachers reported using sick days to care for ill children, reflecting the dual burden of professional and familial caregiving. The stress experienced at school, stemming from workload, lack of resources, and emotional labor, often spills over into home life, exacerbating mental health concerns.

Further, isolation and lack of collegial support are also significant contributors to teacher stress and mental health issues. Some teachers frequently feel unsupported by administration and disconnected from peers, which intensifies feelings of professional isolation. This lack of support is particularly detrimental in environments where mental health resources are limited or stigmatized. Teachers reported that stigma surrounding mental health and leaves of absence was prevalent, discouraging them from seeking help.

McLean, et al. (2023) explicated that teachers face significant mental health challenges stemming from student-related issues, particularly the rising prevalence of student mental health concerns. Teacher distress was positively associated with student internalizing and externalizing symptoms, especially in elementary schools. When students perceive their school environment as unsafe, the impact of teacher distress on student behavior is magnified. This dynamic creates a feedback loop where teachers, already under strain, must manage emotionally complex classrooms, further exacerbating their own mental health challenges.

In addition, behavioral issues and safety concerns in the classroom also contribute to teacher stress and anxiety. Teachers reported an increase in disruptive behavior compared to pre-pandemic levels. Frequent tantrums, defiance, and aggression, occurring multiple times per week or even daily, have become common, placing teachers in emotionally and physically demanding situations. These behaviors not only disrupt learning but also create an environment of unpredictability and tension, which can lead to chronic stress and burnout among educators (Jones & Jones, 2024).

Additionally, systemic and organizational issues are among the most significant contributors to teacher mental health concerns. Rigid policies, such as inflexible teaching assignments and the pressure of standardized testing, often reduce teachers' autonomy and increase stress. It was emphasized that when teachers are expected to comply with policies that conflict with their professional judgment, they experience a loss of agency and value in their roles, leading to higher levels of burnout. Teachers who felt respected and had autonomy in decision-making were less likely to experience burnout and more likely to report job satisfaction. This underscores the importance of involving teachers in policy development and implementation to foster a sense of ownership and psychological safety (Herman & Reddy, 2024).

Doan, et al. (2024) elucidated that inadequate mental health resources in schools further exacerbate the stress teachers face. The author stressed that wellness initiatives must go beyond superficial efforts like one-time mindfulness sessions and instead involve long-term, systemic changes. Teachers expressed a strong desire for trauma-informed training, peer support groups, and access to professional counseling. Without these supports, teachers are left to manage their own well-being in isolation, which can lead to chronic stress and emotional exhaustion.

Furthermore, poor working conditions, including overcrowded classrooms, outdated facilities, and insufficient planning time, also contribute to teacher burnout. Teachers reported that increased workloads, lack of administrative support, and deteriorating physical environments significantly impacted their

morale and mental health. These conditions not only hinder effective teaching but also diminish teachers' sense of professional fulfillment. Improving working conditions, such as reducing class sizes, modernizing facilities, and allocating time for planning and collaboration, is essential for sustaining teacher well-being and retention (Corrente, et al., 2022).

Moreover, teachers face a range of psychological outcomes due to the chronic stressors embedded in their profession, with burnout being one of the most prevalent. Burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. Teachers with higher self-efficacy reported lower levels of burnout, suggesting that confidence in classroom management and professional competence can buffer against emotional exhaustion. However, even experienced teachers, despite their higher efficacy, were more likely to report burnout, indicating that prolonged exposure to systemic stressors can erode resilience over time (Marshall, et al., 2024).

In addition, anxiety and depression are also common psychological outcomes among teachers, often linked to overwhelming demands and insufficient support. It was revealed that teachers experienced significant declines in subjective mental health, morale, and work-life balance during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Increased workloads, reduced administrative support, and the emotional toll of adapting to new teaching modalities contributed to heightened anxiety and depressive symptoms. Teachers reported feeling isolated and undervalued, which further intensified their mental health struggles. These findings underscore the need for systemic interventions that prioritize teacher well-being and provide consistent emotional and professional support (Agyapong, et al., 2022).

The broader implications of these psychological outcomes extend beyond individual teachers to the entire educational system. It was emphasized that stress, burnout, anxiety, and depression not only impair teacher health but also negatively affect student outcomes and school performance. Teachers experiencing mental health challenges are more likely to be absent, less engaged, and less effective in the classroom. Addressing these psychological outcomes is essential for sustaining a healthy, effective teaching workforce and ensuring quality education for students (Einav, et al., 2024).

Coping Mechanisms and Resilience Strategies. Teachers utilize a range of coping strategies and resilience techniques to effectively address mental health challenges. Among the most common methods are active coping, where teachers proactively seek out solutions to their stressors, and positive coping, which focuses on maintaining a hopeful attitude and leveraging personal strengths (Tortola, 2024). Support systems, including peer groups and professional networks, offer both emotional and practical assistance, aiding teachers in managing their stress (Suttles, 2024). Additionally, participating in physical activities, pursuing hobbies, and practicing mindfulness can enhance emotional well-being by fostering relaxation and alleviating stress. Ultimately, a blend of personal, social, and institutional support is vital for building resilience and improving teachers' mental health (Emeljanovas, et al., 2023).

Moreover, teachers adapt a variety of coping mechanisms and resilience strategies to manage stress and mental health challenges effectively including active coping or problem solving, social support, physical activity, mindfulness and relaxation techniques, and professional development (Emeljanovas, et al., 2023; Suttles, 2024).

Problem-solving is a crucial strategy for teachers dealing with mental health challenges, allowing them to proactively address stressors and regain control over their work situations. Teachers frequently face numerous obstacles, including heavy workloads, student behavior issues, and administrative pressures, all of which can take a toll on their mental health. By employing problem-focused coping strategies, teachers can engage in solution-oriented thinking, analyzing their challenges to modify or eliminate stress sources. This approach is particularly effective when teachers believe their stressors are manageable and within their control. This sense of empowerment encourages teachers to take meaningful steps to improve their situations, reduce anxiety, and boost their emotional resilience (Wang, et al., 2022).

Further, utilizing problem-solving as a coping mechanism offers long-term benefits for teachers' mental well-being. When teachers adopt proactive strategies—like creating action plans and actively seeking solutions to their challenges—they become better equipped to manage stress sustainably. This method stands in contrast to avoidant coping strategies, which can worsen stress and lead to burnout. Teachers who hone strong problem-solving abilities tend to experience lower levels of mental health issues, including anxiety and depression, as they feel empowered to address the negative effects of stress. Additionally, this proactive approach enhances teachers' overall job satisfaction, as they feel more competent and capable of managing their professional responsibilities (Suttles, 2024).

Social support plays a vital role in helping teachers cope with mental health challenges, which provides emotional relief and reduces feelings of isolation. By discussing their concerns and emotions with family and friends, teachers can foster understanding and connection, gaining perspective on their challenges and lightening their mental load. Perceived support from social networks can alleviate stress and act as a buffer against burnout, ultimately enhancing overall well-being and job satisfaction (Einav, et al., 2024).

Furthermore, social interactions give teachers the chance to explore different solutions to their problems. Sharing experiences allows them to receive advice, encouragement, and insights, empowering them to navigate stressors more effectively. This external support helps teachers regain control over their circumstances and leads to better mental health outcomes. When teachers feel supported by their social networks, they tend to adopt a more positive outlook, making them less likely to experience anxiety or depression, especially during challenging times like the COVID-19 pandemic (Spark Generation, 2022).

Physical activity is a powerful way for teachers to cope with mental health challenges. Regular participation in sports and exercise provides both physical and emotional benefits, helping teachers manage stress more effectively. When teachers exercise, their bodies release endorphins, often referred to as "feel-good" hormones, which can uplift mood and lessen feelings of anxiety and depression. Staying active can shield teachers from the adverse effects

of job-related stress, a common issue in the teaching profession. Additionally, consistent physical activity builds mental resilience which empowers teachers to face their responsibilities with a more positive and energetic outlook (Liu, et al., 2024).

Additionally, physical activity contributes to overall well-being, which in turn supports emotional health. Teachers who make exercise a regular part of their routine often report improved sleep quality, less fatigue, and higher energy levels—factors that all enhance their ability to manage stress. Activities such as yoga, walking, or participating in team sports give teachers a sense of control over their health and serve as a form of self-care. Regular exercise not only boosts cognitive function but also alleviates symptoms of burnout, a significant issue faced by teachers around the globe (da Silva et al., 2024; Mancone, et al., 2024).

Mindfulness and relaxation techniques, including meditation and deep-breathing exercises, are recognized as effective ways for teachers to manage mental health issues. These practices help teachers enhance their emotional regulation, lower anxiety levels, and improve overall mental wellness. By concentrating on the present moment, mindfulness helps teachers carve out mental space, enabling them to handle stress, often prevalent in educational settings, more effectively. Mindfulness training can bolster problem-solving skills, which will equip teachers with the resources they need to navigate challenging situations with a balanced and focused approach (Carroll, et. al., 2022).

In addition, relaxation techniques like deep-breathing exercises are essential for calming both the mind and body, especially for teachers dealing with burnout or emotional exhaustion. Deep breathing helps slow the body's stress response, reducing cortisol levels and fostering a sense of calm. These straightforward yet powerful techniques can be practiced anywhere. Deep breathing and mindfulness practices not only enhance mental clarity but also help diminish symptoms of anxiety and depression, which are crucial tools for teachers' overall well-being (Mahindru, Patil, & Agrawal, 2023).

Participating in professional development (PD) programs has emerged as an effective way for teachers to address their mental health challenges. These programs not only enhance teachers' skills but also equip them with personalized coping strategies to address the specific difficulties they encounter in their roles. By engaging in PD, teachers can build resilience and learn practical techniques to manage stress, anxiety, and burnout—issues that are all too common in the teaching field. Programs that incorporate mental health elements encourage teachers to reflect on their emotional well-being and provide tools to enhance their overall mental health (Shakimova, et al., 2024).

More so, PD opportunities foster the development of support networks among teachers, creating a sense of community and shared understanding. Collaborating with colleagues allows teachers to exchange experiences, resources, and coping strategies, which help to alleviate feelings of isolation. Teachers who actively participate in PD initiatives tend to experience higher job satisfaction and improved mental health. These programs offer valuable strategies for emotional regulation, problem-solving, and resilience-building. By prioritizing professional growth, PD programs empower teachers to address challenges with greater confidence and maintain a healthier mental state (Meyer, et al., 2023; Tang, 2024).

Challenges in Addressing Mental Health in Education. Addressing mental health within the education sector presents a variety of challenges, particularly because teachers frequently serve as the first line of support for their students. However, numerous obstacles hinder teachers from effectively managing their own mental health issues. A significant barrier is the insufficient training in mental health literacy, which restricts teachers' ability to identify and handle both their own mental health concerns and those of their students. Many teachers report feeling unprepared to resolve mental health issues due to a lack of adequate training, which in turn leads to feelings of inadequacy and increased stress (Schulte-Körne, 2016).

This gap in training often results in teachers failing to recognize mental health symptoms in themselves, which contributes to burnout and emotional exhaustion. Additionally, limited access to professional development programs focused on mental health exacerbates this situation, as schools may not prioritize or allocate enough funding for such initiatives (Moghimi et al., 2023).

Another significant hurdle is the stigma surrounding mental health. Like many professionals, teachers may feel reluctant to seek help due to fear of judgment or concerns about appearing incapable of fulfilling their responsibilities. This stigma can deter teachers from pursuing mental health support, as they worry about being seen as weak or unqualified for their roles. This reluctance is particularly pronounced in areas where mental health awareness is low, further complicating the issue (Shim, et. al., 2022).

Moreover, various structural factors, including geographical location, workload, and resource availability, hinder teachers from addressing their mental health needs. For instance, teachers in rural or under-resourced areas may lack access to mental health services, and their heavy workloads can make it challenging to carve out time for self-care. These logistical challenges often leave many teachers feeling isolated and unable to effectively manage their mental health (Gunawardena, et al., 2024).

In addition, teachers often experience "role conflict," where they are expected to prioritize the emotional needs of their students while neglecting their own. This imbalance creates additional mental strain, as teachers may place their students' well-being above their personal mental health. Without institutional support and clear policies that promote self-care for teachers, many teachers hesitate to seek assistance, leading to burnout and diminished job satisfaction (O'Farrell, et. al., 2023).

Support Systems for Teacher Mental Health. Support systems aimed at enhancing teacher mental health have become increasingly important in today's educational landscape, given the rising pressures teachers face. Numerous programs and interventions have been developed to tackle the mental health issues that teachers encounter. A prominent approach is the implementation of school-wide initiatives that offer mental health training and promote the overall well-being of teachers. Many schools have adopted mental health literacy programs designed to empower teachers with the skills to identify and manage their own mental health challenges as well as those of their students. Teachers who undergo mental health training experience lower stress levels and develop better coping strategies (Fazel, et. al., 2014; Rahmi, 2024).

Another effective strategy is the establishment of structured support networks within schools, such as peer support groups and professional counseling services. These networks enable teachers to share their experiences, seek guidance, and alleviate the isolation often associated with their profession. Peer support can provide emotional comfort and help teachers build resilience in the face of workplace challenges. Moreover, some schools now offer professional counseling services tailored specifically for teachers, acknowledging that addressing mental health requires dedicated resources (White, 2022).

Additionally, Eva (2024) stated that certain schools have enhanced their employee wellness programs by integrating comprehensive mental health benefits. These benefits may include access to therapy, designated mental health days, and tools to help teachers manage stress related to their work. Some schools have included mental health days in the academic calendar to ensure teachers have set times for rest and recuperation. These structural changes not only enhance teachers' well-being but also lead to increased job satisfaction and reduced burnout rates.

Further, digital platforms have emerged as a valuable resource for supporting teacher mental health. These platforms offer access to self-help materials, mental health apps, and online counseling, making it easier to seek assistance discreetly. The flexibility of these platforms allows teachers to access mental health support at their convenience, making it a practical option for those with busy schedules. Such digital resources can effectively complement existing in-person interventions which ensures that teachers have consistent access to the support they need (Agarwal, 2023).

Impact of the Educational Environment on Teacher's Mental Health. The environment in which teachers work is crucial for their mental health, influenced by key factors such as school culture, workload, and the level of administrative support they receive. School culture encompasses the values, beliefs, and behaviors that define an educational institution, and it plays a significant role in teachers' job satisfaction and emotional health. A positive school culture promotes collaboration, respect, and a sense of belonging, leading to reduced stress and increased job satisfaction among teachers. On the other hand, a negative school culture marked by conflict, lack of support, and poor communication can heighten feelings of isolation and mental distress (Agyapong et al., 2022; Kanwal et al., 2023; Singh & Gautam, 2024).

In addition, workload is another significant factor affecting teachers' mental well-being. Many teachers are burdened with heavy workloads, which can result in stress, burnout, and disengagement. The overwhelming work demands not only affect teachers' mental health but also hinder their ability to effectively connect with students and provide quality education. Teachers who are swamped with administrative duties, lesson planning, and grading frequently report feeling overwhelmed, which adversely affects their mental state and job satisfaction (Kanwal, et al., 2023; Wang, 2023).

Further, administrative support is essential in alleviating the negative impacts of workload and supporting teachers' mental health. When administrators provide necessary resources, professional development, and emotional support, it can significantly improve teachers' job satisfaction. An environment where administrators prioritize teachers' well-being and maintain open communication fosters a supportive workplace, enabling teachers to succeed despite the challenges they face. Perceived organizational support is linked to lower stress levels and greater engagement among teachers (Kelly, 2024; Wang, 2023).

Furthermore, the relationship between these factors—school culture, workload, and administrative support—creates a feedback loop that affects teachers' mental health. For example, a supportive school culture can mitigate the stresses of a heavy workload, while strong administrative support can cultivate a positive school environment and reduce the strain associated with demanding job responsibilities. This interconnectedness highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to enhancing educational environments and protecting teachers' mental health (Rahmi, 2024).

In general, addressing the impact of the educational environment on teachers' mental health requires a collaborative effort from all involved. By nurturing a positive school culture, effectively managing workloads, and offering substantial administrative support, educational institutions can boost teachers' mental health. This improvement will not only benefit the teachers themselves but also enhance student outcomes and overall school performance (Jessiman et al., 2022).

1.4 Theoretical Lens

This study was anchored on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory of Bakker and Demerouti (2007; 2017). The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory illustrates how workplace environments impose various demands on individuals, which can lead to mental health challenges like stress and burnout when there are not enough resources to meet those demands. The theory emphasizes the need to strike a balance between job demands—such as heavy workloads and emotional pressures—and the resources available, such as support systems and mental health services. This framework helps us understand the mental health issues teachers face in today's educational environment, where they are often overwhelmed by numerous demands and inadequate support systems (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Additionally, the JD-R theory sheds light on how these job demands influence teachers' mental health, motivation, and overall performance. In schools, teachers deal with significant pressures, including large workloads, emotional demands from students, administrative responsibilities, and the need to adapt to evolving educational practices. When these demands are not matched by sufficient resources—like supportive colleagues, professional development opportunities, and necessary classroom materials—their mental health suffers. This imbalance can lead to increased exhaustion and mental health issues, making it challenging for teachers to perform effectively and maintain their well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Moreover, the JD-R theory also highlights the vital role of job resources in alleviating the negative impacts of high demands. For teachers, resources such as a supportive work environment, access to mental health services, and opportunities for professional growth can significantly buffer the effects of job stress. When teachers have adequate resources, they are better equipped to implement coping strategies, seek support from peers, engage in professional

development, and prioritize self-care. By understanding the relationship between job demands and available resources, the JD-R model provides valuable insights into the experiences of teachers and underscores the necessity for schools to offer comprehensive support systems that safeguard teachers' mental health and overall well-being.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents the Conceptual Framework of this study which focuses on the lived experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights of elementary school teachers about their mental health concerns in New Bataan District, Davao de Oro. It examines how daily teaching challenges impact teachers' mental health, highlighting stressors and systemic issues that exacerbate mental health struggles. The study also examines teachers' personal and professional insights, coping mechanisms, adaptive strategies, and areas for support. It aims to understand teachers' lived experiences and navigate the complex demands of the educational environment.

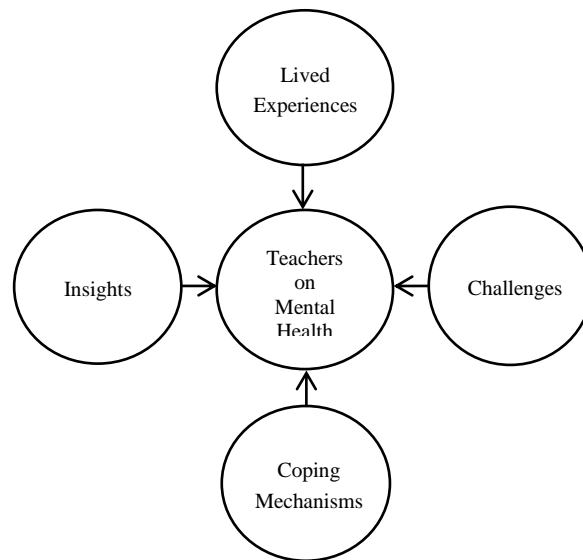


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

2. Methods

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research method using a phenomenological design. Qualitative research is comprehensive, involving the collection and analysis of non-numerical data like text, audio, or video to grasp thoughts, ideas, or experiences. This scientific method sought answers to questions using established processes, gathering evidence, and producing relevant findings. Additionally, qualitative studies allow participants to share their narratives without researcher bias. These methods promoted in-depth exploration, often using open-ended questions that enable researchers to capture diverse perspectives without predefined categories. This approach yielded rich insights about a small group, enhancing the understanding of those individuals (Bhandari, 2023; Butins, 2022).

2.2 Participants

The participants of this study were the six identified elementary school teachers in New Bataan District, Davao de Oro for School Year 2024-2025. The participants were fairly and purposively selected and identified through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of a participant based on their characteristics and traits. Specifically, the participants were selected regardless of sex, educational and cultural background, and socio-economic level, provided however that they are elementary school teachers of New Bataan District who are experiencing mental health issues in schools, and who are willing to and will voluntarily participate in the study.

The study involved six currently employed elementary teachers from the New Bataan District, each with at least five years of teaching experience and a self-acknowledged history of mental health concerns such as stress, anxiety, or burnout related to their profession. The participants were purposefully composed of two young teachers, two middle-aged teachers, and two retireable teachers, with all participants being at least 25 years old to ensure sufficient professional and personal experience. To be considered, participants had to provide informed consent and be available for online in-depth interviews. Excluded from the study were teachers not working in elementary schools, those unwilling to acknowledge mental health issues, those with less than five years of service, individuals below 25 years of age, temporary or substitute teachers, and those with serious physical conditions that could hinder participation.

The identification of eligible participants was conducted discreetly with the assistance of school heads and guidance counselors, based on objective indicators such as Electronic Self-Assessment Tools (eSAT), School Form 7 data on teacher workloads, and approved sick leave forms related to stress or anxiety. These documents helped ensure that participant selection was grounded in ethical and verifiable data. Moreover, potential participants were invited through email to protect confidentiality and reduce the risk of stigmatization. Eligibility was confirmed through a structured, multi-stage process that included a preliminary review, clarificatory steps, and one-on-one online screening. Participants also had to willingly confirm to the researcher their experience of stress or anxiety related to teaching. After providing informed consent, participants were scheduled for private online interviews, during which their emotional safety was supported through coordination with school guidance counselors who also provided debriefings. Participation was entirely voluntary, and teachers had the freedom to withdraw at any point without repercussions or the loss of any benefits. Additionally, they retained all legal rights throughout their involvement in the study.

2.3 Data Gathering

Data collection is a structured process used to gather information and insights, allowing researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the research problem. For this study, the first step was securing approval to conduct the study from the Assumption College of Nabunturan (ACN) - Ethics Review Committee (ERC) and endorsement from the Dean of the Graduate School by submitting the required documents. I then sent a formal request to the Schools Division Superintendent of the Davao de Oro Division to seek permission to conduct my research. Afterward, I also obtained approval from the District Supervisor and school heads of the selected teachers. These permissions are essential to ensure the data collection process is officially authorized.

To effectively identify participants, the researcher sought assistance from the school head and guidance counselor in recognizing teachers experiencing mental health concerns based on available school records. These records included the Electronic Self-Assessment Tool (eSAT), which evaluates teachers' functional and behavioral competencies and may indicate high stress levels; School Form 7, which documents teachers' workloads and helps identify those at risk of burnout; and approved sick leave forms related to stress and anxiety, which provide tangible evidence of mental health struggles. Utilizing these documents ensured that participant selection is conducted ethically and based on objective data.

Moreover, the selection process was structured to align with the study's objectives while prioritizing participants' privacy and emotional and psychological well-being. When potential participants were discreetly identified with the assistance of the school head and guidance counselor, the researcher will sent confidential email invitations to the identified teachers to maintain anonymity and prevent stigma. Interested teachers voluntarily underwent preliminary, clarificatory, and one-on-one screening interviews online to determine their eligibility and willingness to participate in the study. To further verify eligibility, teachers voluntarily confirmed to the researcher that they are experiencing work-related stress or anxiety. Once confirmed, the researcher personally explained the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and confidentiality measures, and seek their consent to participate. During this meeting, we also agreed on a convenient time for the in-depth, online interviews using a semi-structured questionnaire. Before the interview day, participants were provided with an Informed Consent Form to confirm their voluntary participation and will be given enough time to read and sign the form. To ensure privacy and emotional comfort, debriefing sessions were conducted for participants before the online interviews with the assistance of the school's guidance counselor. The researcher maintained continuous communication with the school's guidance counselor to provide emotional and psychological support before, during, and after the interviews.

In addition, the researcher assured them that they can use their preferred language and had the right to skip any questions they are uncomfortable answering. Before starting the interview, the researcher also asked for permission from the participants to record the interview. Each participant was interviewed individually and virtually at a time of their choosing. To ensure confidentiality, their responses were securely stored in a password-protected drive, accessible only to me. All interviews were transcribed verbatim, and a thematic analysis were conducted to organize the data for presentation and further analysis in the study.

2.4 Data Analysis

In data analysis, the large amount of information gathered from interviews and observations needed to be summarized and organized. Analyzing qualitative data can often be seen as the most complex and least discussed part of the research process. The most common approach to analyzing qualitative data involved reading through transcripts to identify similarities and differences, then grouping them into themes and categories. For this study, I followed four key steps in analysing the data: managing the raw data, reducing the data, interpreting the data, and presenting the findings.

First, I began by managing the raw data, which involved transcribing the participants' responses from the interviews. Transcription is a crucial step in qualitative research because it involves converting conversations from interviews or focus groups into written form for analysis. In this study, I manually transcribed all the recorded interviews, carefully listening to the audio, creating a draft, proofreading it, and formatting it according to a specific transcription format. This allowed me to have a structured dataset to work with.

Next, I moved to the data reduction phase, where I cleaned or scrubbed the gathered data to remove any irrelevant or unusable portions. This step is important because it helped improve the quality of the data before I analyzed it. In this study, I carefully deleted incomplete phrases or expressions that do not add meaning to the analysis. However, I ensured that only unnecessary parts are removed, while retaining the core data needed for a thorough examination. After reducing the data, I focused on interpreting it through coding and theming. This process involved classifying responses into categories and identifying key patterns or themes that emerge from the participants' answers. I read through the data multiple times, label segments of information with codes, reduce any redundancy, and eventually form major themes. Lastly, in the data representation phase, I presented the findings clearly and

concisely, using tables and charts to highlight the most significant points. Each table included participants' verbatim responses, the core ideas behind those responses, and the themes developed. To ensure accuracy, I sought feedback from my research adviser and data analyst.

2.5 Trustworthiness and Credibility

Trustworthiness is key to ensuring that research findings are seen as valuable and reliable. It refers to the quality and authenticity of the study, building confidence in the results. To make a study credible and worthy of readers' attention, researchers must follow clear protocols and methods. In this study, I focused on the strategies of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability to ensure trustworthiness.

Credibility ensures that research findings accurately represent participants' views and reflect the truth of the data collected. To maintain credibility in this study, I used techniques like iterative questioning and member checking, as I am conducting in-depth interviews. Iterative questioning involves asking follow-up questions to clarify or expand on participants' initial responses, ensuring that the information gathered is thorough and directly relevant to the research. In addition, member checking will be used to verify the accuracy of the interview transcripts. Participants reviewed their responses, allowing them to request changes or add information if necessary. Once they confirmed the accuracy of their input, certificates of member checking were provided to ensure that their feedback is fully incorporated into the final analysis.

Dependability refers to the consistency of research findings and the degree to which the research process is clearly documented, allowing others to follow, audit, and assess it. It ensures that the findings are stable and repeatable over time. The aim is to guarantee that the results align with the data collected, so if other researchers review the same data, they can reach similar conclusions. In this study, I thoroughly documented the methodology and the steps taken, ensuring that future researchers can evaluate whether appropriate research practices were followed.

Confirmability ensures that research findings are based on the data and not influenced by the researcher's biases, allowing others to verify and replicate the study. To achieve this in my research, I maintained an audit trail that clearly documents every decision and procedure, from data collection to analysis and interpretation. This transparent record will help others trace the steps taken and evaluate whether the conclusions are rooted in the data. Additionally, I kept thorough records of all relevant information and consulted with my research adviser and data analyst to ensure the findings are grounded in the data, and not influenced by personal bias.

Transferability refers to how well qualitative research findings can be applied to other contexts or situations. It is the researcher's responsibility to provide enough detail for others to determine if the findings are generalizable. By offering a thorough explanation of the research background, context, and assumptions, researchers enhance the potential for transferability. In this study, I focused on transferability by giving a detailed description of the methodology, research site, participants, and data collection procedures. This will allow others to assess whether the findings and recommendations are applicable to different settings.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethics plays a crucial role in ensuring research is both effective and meaningful. Research ethics involves adhering to moral and legal standards in conducting research, establishing norms that separate right from wrong, and acceptable from unacceptable actions.

Bhashin (2020) highlights that ethical considerations maintain core values and principles throughout the research process to preserve its integrity. The researcher committed to following strict ethical standards, focusing on areas like social value, informed consent, participant vulnerability, risks, benefits, safety, privacy, confidentiality, justice, transparency, and qualifications.

Social Value. The primary goal of this study was to investigate the challenges and coping mechanisms faced by elementary school teachers who are experiencing mental health concerns in New Bataan District, Davao de Oro, particularly at Andap ES, Bantacan ES, and Cabinuangan CES. By exploring these experiences, the research contributed valuable insights into how teachers navigate and address mental health concerns and its impacts on their teaching practices. The findings of the study were shared with other schools in the district, division, and even region. Additionally, the study was published online to allow other researchers to reference and build upon its conclusions for future studies.

Informed Consent. To ensure ethical integrity, participants were provided with Informed Consent Forms (ICFs) that outline the study's purpose, the researcher's contact information, and the voluntary nature of their participation. These forms made it clear that participants can choose to withdraw from the study at any stage without facing any consequences or losing any benefits. This process guaranteed that the participants' autonomy is respected, and they are fully aware of their rights before consenting to participate.

Vulnerability. The study aimed to safeguard the well-being of participants by ensuring that they are fully informed about the interview procedures. The researcher explained the process clearly, emphasizing that participants are free to withdraw at any time if they feel uncomfortable or if they wish to discontinue their participation for any reason. By doing so, the researcher ensured that participants are never coerced or forced into continuing the study.

Risks, Benefits, and Safety. The researcher carefully outlined both the potential risks and benefits of participating in the study to provide full transparency about what participants can expect. In order to accommodate their schedules and comfort, interviews were held at convenient times and locations for the participants. Additionally, the researcher reimbursed any expenses incurred by the participants during their involvement in the study.

Privacy and Confidentiality. In compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, the study maintained strict confidentiality of all personal data and responses collected from participants. All data were securely stored to ensure that it is not accessible to unauthorized individuals. Once the study was

concluded, all collected data were destroyed to prevent any future breaches of privacy. This strict confidentiality protocol ensured the protection of participants' sensitive information throughout the research process.

Justice. To ensure fairness in participant selection, the researcher chose participants based on relevant criteria such as their experience as teachers and their challenges with mental health. This selection process was transparent and unbiased to ensure that a diverse and representative sample of teachers is included in the study. Also, participants received reimbursements for any expenses incurred during the study, as well as tokens of appreciation for their time and contributions.

Transparency. The researcher maintained full transparency throughout the study by providing participants with a clear explanation of the research's objectives. Participants also received copies of their interview transcripts, allowing them to verify the accuracy of the data collected.

Qualification. The researcher was well-prepared to conduct this study, having previously undertaken similar research during her college education. This prior experience equipped the researcher with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate the research process effectively. Furthermore, the researcher's background ensured a thorough understanding of the ethical guidelines and best practices involved in conducting research with human participants.

Additionally, the researcher obtained permission from relevant authorities, including the Dean of the Graduate School, Schools Division Superintendent, District Supervisor, and School Heads, to ensure the study follows ethical guidelines.

3. Results

This chapter presents the findings related to the research questions that examined teachers' perspectives on mental health issues. The study primarily focused on the lived experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights of teachers in relation to their mental health challenges in the current educational landscape. The research participants were the six public elementary school teachers in New Bataan District, the desired number of samples for the in-depth interview. The responses were analyzed using content analysis to identify common themes. To maintain research ethics in qualitative studies, codes were used to conceal the identities of the participants. The results were presented in the order of the specific research questions addressed in this study.

3.1. *What are the lived experiences of teachers about their mental health concerns in the modern educational landscape?*

This section presents the results to the 1st major research question; 'What are the lived experiences of teachers about their mental health concerns in the modern educational landscape?' Seven specific research questions were used to gather data and information for this major research question. The questions were intended to gather information on the understanding of the research participants regarding the definition of mental health, specific events or situations that triggered one's mental health concerns, description of one's daily routines, impact of mental health on work-life balance, and the perception on the support systems available within school.

3.1.1. *Definition of Mental Health*

The themes in this section were coming from the specific research question 1.1 'What is mental health?' The responses generated three themes: emotional, psychological, and social well-being; stability and stress management; and positive thinking and coping stress.

Emotional, Psychological, and Social Well-Being. Mental health includes an individual's emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Informants emphasized that these three aspects are essential for understanding mental health. Emotional well-being involves managing and expressing emotions appropriately, psychological well-being encompasses cognitive processes and mental functions, and social well-being relates to how individuals interact with others and form relationships. These elements together provide a comprehensive view of mental health.

Stability and Stress Management. Stability and stress management are vital aspects of mental health. Informants highlighted the significance of emotional stability and the ability to manage stress effectively. This involves maintaining a balanced emotional state and developing skills to handle stressors healthily. Effective stress management can prevent stress from escalating into more severe mental health issues, thereby promoting overall mental harmony.

Positive Thinking and Coping Stress. Positive thinking and the ability to cope with stress are crucial for maintaining good mental health. Informants linked mental health with the capacity to maintain a positive outlook and handle life's challenges. Positive thinking can enhance resilience, reduce the impact of stress, and improve overall well-being. Coping strategies, such as problem-solving and seeking support, help individuals navigate stressors more effectively, contributing to better mental health outcomes.

3.1.2 *Specific Events or Situations That Triggered One's Mental Health Concern*

This section presents the results to the specific research question 1.2 'What specific events or situations have triggered your mental health concerns?' under the 1st major research question 'What are the lived experiences of teachers about their mental health concerns in the modern educational landscape?'.

The following themes served as results, which were: meeting deadlines, changes and demands, heavy workload, financial struggles and relationship issues, bad past experiences, managing classes, and dealing with toxic co-workers.

Meeting Deadlines, Changes and Demands. Meeting deadlines, adjusting to changes, and managing demands greatly affect mental health. Informants noted that stressful times, such as during tests or report card deadlines, sudden policy changes, and unreasonable demands, often trigger mental health issues. The lack of support during these periods increases the stress, underscoring the importance of mental health alongside physical and intellectual development.

Heavy Workload. A heavy workload is a frequent trigger for mental health issues. Informants explained that overwhelming workloads, combined with high expectations, lead to stress and anxiety. Also, additional stressors like large class sizes, inadequate school facilities, and administrative pressure further exacerbate the burden and negatively impact mental well-being.

Financial Struggles and Relationship Issues. Financial difficulties and relationship problems are major sources of chronic stress. Informants pointed out that ongoing financial challenges and personal relationship issues can cause persistent stress, which adversely affects mental health. These continuous stressors can create a cycle of anxiety and emotional distress.

Bad Past Experiences. Negative past experiences, such as a broken family or a toxic work environment, have lasting effects on mental health. Also, childhood trauma and work-related stress, including the pressure to meet deadlines and conflicting priorities, contribute to anxiety and mood disturbances. These experiences highlight the enduring impact of early and ongoing stressors on mental health.

Managing Classes. Managing classes with diverse learning abilities and behaviors is a significant mental health trigger. Informant 5 emphasized the challenges of addressing different student needs, which can lead to stress and mental strain. The complexity of classroom management requires substantial emotional and mental resources, which affect overall well-being.

Dealing with Toxic Co-workers. Informants disclosed that dealing with toxic co-workers causes emotional stress. They described the stress of interacting with a bossy co-worker, especially during times of sudden report deadlines. Such interactions create a hostile work environment, which lead to increased stress and emotional exhaustion.

3.1.3. *Description of One's Daily Routines*

The themes derived from the responses of the research informants to the specific research 1.3 'How do you describe your daily routines?' are presented in this section. The themes were: juggling between professional and family concerns, focusing on daily log plan, prioritizing between urgent and important tasks, knowing to keep calm, and meeting the deadline and managing the workload.

Juggling between Professional and Family Concerns. The balance between professional obligations and personal roles emerges as a recurring challenge in the daily routines of teachers. It highlights the continuous effort to manage responsibilities both as a teacher and as a family member or friend, illustrating the blurred boundaries between work and personal life. This dual role reflects the emotional labor and time management skills required to sustain performance in both spheres.

Focusing on Daily Log Plan. Research participants revealed that creating a Daily Log Plan (DLL) is central to the work routine of many teachers, which requires not only time but also cognitive and emotional investment. They emphasized that crafting effective and appropriate DLLs demands careful consideration of student performance, which indicates how pedagogical planning is a reflective and iterative process. Similarly, they identified lesson planning and paperwork as routine but crucial tasks, which reinforces the centrality of structured planning in daily academic responsibilities.

Prioritizing between Urgent and Important Tasks. Informants emphasized the dynamic nature of their daily routines, highlighting the importance of prioritizing tasks based on urgency and importance. This approach ensures that critical tasks are addressed promptly while also allowing for flexibility in managing less urgent responsibilities. Regular breaks are incorporated to recharge and minimize burnout, demonstrating a balanced strategy to maintain productivity and well-being.

Knowing to Keep Calm. Informants focused on the goal of maintaining calmness throughout the day. This practice is essential for managing stress and ensuring a clear, focused mind when tackling daily tasks. By setting this goal, the informant underscores the importance of emotional regulation as a key component of their daily routine, which can enhance overall performance and decision-making.

Meeting the Deadline and Managing the Workload. Informants described the challenges of managing deadlines and workload, often feeling physically and emotionally drained. This highlighted the stress associated with high demands and the struggle to maintain energy and motivation. It underscores the need for effective time management and self-care strategies to cope with the pressures of meeting deadlines and managing a heavy workload.

3.1.4. *Impact of Mental Health on Work-life Balance*

In this section, the themes created were from the responses to specific research question 1.4, 'What is the impact of mental health on your work-life balance?' The following were the themes: harder to stay focused, blurring the lines between work and personal life, and impacting both personal well-being and workplace performance.

Harder to Stay Focused. Informants highlighted how mental health issues like anxiety can significantly impact focus and enthusiasm, affecting both professional performance and personal time. This underscores the necessity of practicing balance to maintain productivity at work while staying active in personal life.

Blurring the Lines between Work and Personal Life. Informants discussed how professional demands can blur the boundaries between work and personal life, particularly for teachers. The constant connectivity through communication technologies leads to extended working hours and the feeling of being perpetually "on call." This lack of clear separation contributes to increased stress and fatigue, negatively impacting mental health and overall work-life balance.

Impacting both Personal Well-being and Workplace Performance. Research-participants addressed the dual impact of mental health on personal well-being and workplace performance. They noted that mental health issues can lead to exhaustion and lack of focus, making it challenging to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Anxiety and stress on difficult days can hinder focus, which makes it harder to meet deadlines and manage workloads.

3.1.5. *Perception on the Support Systems Available Within School*

Presented in this section are the themes drawn from the responses to the specific question 1.5, 'How do you perceive the support systems available to you within your school?' The following themes were created: only surface-level, very sufficient, inconsistent, life, uncertain, and approachable.

Only Surface-Level. Informants perceived the support systems within the school as surface-level, noting that while resources like counselors and wellness talks are available, they often do not address deeper issues. The practical demands of teaching, such as activities, deadlines, and meetings, lead teachers to prioritize task completion over attending counseling sessions.

Very Sufficient. On the other hand, some view the support system as very sufficient, attributing this to the helpfulness of senior teachers, ample resources, and a supportive School Head. This strong support system fosters a positive environment where teachers feel well-supported in their professional roles. The support systems are somewhat adequate, but there is still room for improvement.

Inconsistent. Also, Informants described the support systems as limited or inconsistent, despite some support from colleagues. The school lacks adequate mental health resources and administrative understanding, which affects the overall effectiveness of the support system. This inconsistency can lead to feelings of being unsupported, particularly in times of need.

Life, Uncertain. Informants emphasized the importance of acknowledging life's uncertainties and embracing change by being open to others. This perspective suggests a more philosophical approach to support, where adaptability and openness are key to navigating the challenges within the school environment.

Approachable. Informants appreciated the approachability and willingness of co-teachers to help with academic queries and provide advice. This sense of camaraderie and mutual support among colleagues is valued and contributes positively to the perception of the support system within the school.

3.1.6. *Understanding of Colleagues and Administration on Mental Health Concerns*

The themes created in this section were from the responses to the specific research question 1.6, 'In what ways do you feel that your mental health concerns are understood or misunderstood by your colleagues and administration?' the themes were: unable to reach out for help, overwhelming, heavy workloads contribute to mental stress, some understand; some do not, unload emotional baggage to colleagues, and colleagues not fully understand.

Unable to Reach Out for Help. Informants disclosed that there is a mixed understanding among colleagues regarding mental health concerns. While some colleagues empathize due to shared experiences, others fail to grasp the situation due to different coping mechanisms and lifestyles. The administration often misinterprets stress as laziness or lack of commitment, making it challenging for teachers to seek help, especially with the heavy workload and numerous responsibilities.

Overwhelming. The overwhelming nature of additional paperwork and event preparations hinders the completion of basic duties like preparing DLLs. Despite these challenges, the informants appreciated the considerate and supportive school heads who champion their strengths and support their weaknesses. This support helps mitigate some of the stress associated with overwhelming tasks.

Heavy Workloads Contribute to Mental Stress. Informants pointed out that mental health concerns are often misunderstood by the administration, as evidenced by the assignment of heavy workloads and ancillary tasks. This misunderstanding exacerbates mental stress, highlighting the need for better recognition and management of teachers' mental health needs.

Some Understand; Some Do Not. Informants noted that while some colleagues are supportive and understanding of mental health issues, others do not fully comprehend their impact on daily life. They emphasized the importance of increased awareness, education, and open communication to bridge this gap and foster a more supportive and inclusive environment.

Unload Emotional Baggage to Colleagues. Informants suggested that sharing main concerns with colleagues can help unload emotional baggage. This practice indicates the value of peer support in managing mental health concerns, providing a sense of relief and understanding among colleagues.

Colleagues not Fully Understand. Informants felt that colleagues often do not fully understand the depth of their mental health struggles, perceiving them merely as tired or stressed. The administration's focus on performance over well-being further limits the space for discussing mental health. They expressed a desire for more comprehensive support systems that go beyond superficial advice to genuinely address mental health needs.

3.1.7. Ways Shift to Online or Hybrid Teaching Environments Affected One's Mental Health

This section presents the themes for the specific question 1.7, 'How has the shift to online or hybrid teaching environments affected your mental health?' From the responses, the following themes were drawn: overwhelming, took it as a challenge, negatively affected one's mental health, mixed impact, and mentally exhausting.

Overwhelming. The transition to online and hybrid teaching environments has been overwhelming for many teachers. Informants described the initial difficulty in navigating new technologies and managing virtual classes. Despite being tech-savvy, the constant pressure to engage students and meet evaluation standards was exhausting.

Took It as a Challenge. For some, the shift to online teaching presented an opportunity for growth, where they viewed the transition as a positive challenge that allows teachers to learn new skills and overcome previous limitations. Similarly, they found it challenging yet stimulating to develop new teaching strategies.

Negatively Affected One's Mental Health. The shift has had a detrimental impact on some teachers' mental health. Teachers struggled with the demands of using various online platforms and the lack of face-to-face interaction. Poor internet connectivity and unfamiliarity with digital tools exacerbated these challenges, leading to significant stress and frustration.

Mixed Impact. The impact of the shift has been mixed for some teachers. Informants appreciated the increased flexibility and improved work-life balance that remote work offered. However, this was tempered by the challenges of adapting to new teaching environments. This duality highlights the complex nature of the transition, with both positive and negative mental health implications.

Mentally Exhausting. The shift has been mentally exhausting for many teachers. Informants described how the blurred lines between work and personal life made it difficult to disconnect and relax. The rapid adaptation to new tools and the pressure to maintain teaching quality added to their anxiety. This experience of isolation and lack of self-care is a common theme among teachers during this transition.

3.2. What specific challenges do teachers face about their mental health?

This section presents the results to the 2nd major research question; 'What specific challenges do teachers face about their mental health?' Five specific research questions were used to gather data and information for this major research question. The questions were intended to gather information on the understanding of the research participants regarding the mental health issues currently facing, ways workload demands and job stressors contribute to one's mental health challenges, ways external factors impact one's mental health, ways personal life circumstances intersect with one's personal challenges related to mental health, and barriers encountered when seeking help for one's mental health concerns.

3.2.1. Mental Health Issues Currently Facing

The themes in this section were coming from the specific research question 2.1 'What are the mental health issues you have been facing?' The responses generated three themes: anxiety, learners' behavior, and concerns from pupils and parents.

Anxiety. Anxiety is a prevalent issue among teachers. Informants shared experiences of anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and occasional burnout, making it challenging to stay motivated and engage with students. They also mentioned anxiety, along with burnout and depression, which highlights the severe impact on job satisfaction and physical health. Also, Informants echoed these sentiments, adding stress and self-doubt to the list of mental health struggles.

Learners' Behavior. The behavior of learners can also contribute to mental health issues for educators. Informants pointed out that managing students' behavior, coupled with the lack of educational resources and facilities, adds to the stress and challenges faced by teachers.

Concerns From Pupils and Parents. Concerns from pupils and parents further exacerbate mental health issues. Informant 5 highlighted the stress caused by addressing the issues and concerns of both students and their parents, as well as the broader socio-political context. This indicates that external pressures and expectations can significantly impact teachers' mental health, adding another layer of complexity to their professional responsibilities.

3.2.2. Ways Workload Demands and Job Stressors Contribute to One's Mental Health Challenges

This section presents the results to the specific research question 2.2 'How do workload demands and job stressors contribute to your mental health challenges?' The following themes served as results, which were: managing everything stressful, and mental fatigue, excessive workloads.

Managing Everything Stressful. The demands of managing multiple responsibilities simultaneously can be overwhelming. Teachers experienced stress and anxiety of balancing non-stop workloads and meeting expectations from students, parents, and management. This constant pressure often leaves little time to enjoy life outside of work, highlighting the significant mental strain associated with teaching.

Mental Fatigue. Workload demands contribute significantly to mental fatigue. Informants noted that the relentless pace and high expectations lead to considerable mental exhaustion. This fatigue can affect overall well-being, making it difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Excessive Workloads. Excessive workloads are a common stressor. Informants mentioned that the heavy workload and additional tasks often require overtime work, making it challenging to complete everything within a day. They pointed out that long working hours lead to both physical and mental exhaustion. Informants added that excessive demands leave little time for self-care, which is crucial for maintaining the quality of work and personal well-being.

3.2.3. Ways External Factors Impact One's Mental Health

The themes derived from the responses of the research informants to the specific research 2.3 'In what ways do external factors, such as societal expectations or learners' behaviors, impact your mental health?' are presented in this section. The themes were: disrespectful behaviors can impact mental health, unsurmountable amount of paper works, causes stress and burnout, and behavior of people around

Disrespectful Behaviors Can Impact Mental Health. Disrespectful behaviors from students and parents significantly affect teachers' mental health. Informants highlighted the misconception that teachers are expected to know everything, which adds to the pressure. Dealing with disrespectful behavior makes teachers feel judged and misunderstood, limiting their ability to make mistakes and learn. They also noted that parental expectations and demands, along with disrespectful and unmotivated learners, can drain their energy and affect their self-esteem.

Unsurmountable Amount of Paper Works. The overwhelming amount of paperwork is another external factor impacting mental health. Informants mentioned that while they are mentally prepared for external factors, the sheer volume of paperwork takes a toll on them and their colleagues. This indicates that administrative burdens can exacerbate stress and mental fatigue.

Causes Stress and Burnout. External factors such as societal expectations and learners' behaviors can lead to stress and burnout. Informants explained that when personal goals and ideals do not align with external responsibilities, it causes significant stress and burnout.

Behavior of People Around. The behavior of people in the immediate environment can also impact mental health. Informants pointed out that conflicts and problematic behaviors among colleagues add to their stress. They reflected on how societal expectations and the behavior of those around them shape their daily experiences, often leading to anxiety, self-doubt, and fatigue.

3.2.4 Ways Personal Life Circumstances Intersect with One's Personal Challenges Related to Mental Health

This section presents the results to the specific question 2.4 'How do your personal life circumstances intersect with your professional challenges related to mental health?' After subjecting the responses to content analysis, the following themes were drawn: overwhelming, adds frustration, difficult to ask for help, increases the feeling of burnout, negatively affected, and challenged one's limit.

Overwhelming. Personal issues such as family problems or financial stress can significantly compound the stress experienced at work. Informants described how the overlap of personal and professional stressors leaves no time for recovery, making it overwhelming to manage both. This lack of boundaries between personal and professional life can lead to a constant state of stress and exhaustion.

Adds Frustration. The intersection of personal life circumstances with professional challenges can add to frustration and anxiety. Informants noted that dealing with personal problems while managing professional responsibilities, such as paperwork and student behavior, can be incredibly challenging. This dual burden often forces teachers to suppress their emotions and maintain a facade of excellence, even when they are struggling internally.

Difficult to Ask for Help. The stigma associated with mental health issues can make it difficult for teachers to seek help. Teachers fear being judged for mistakes or lapses at work, which discourages them from asking for assistance. The high-pressure nature of the job often prioritizes performance and deadlines over mental health, exacerbating the challenges faced by educators.

Increases the Feeling of Burnout. Personal responsibilities, such as family duties and financial pressures, can increase feelings of burnout. Informants explained that these personal factors can impact their focus and blur the lines between personal and professional life, leading to increased stress and burnout. This intersection makes it difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Negatively Affected. Personal responsibilities can negatively affect professional performance. Family responsibilities often interfere with their ability to complete work tasks, such as paperwork and teaching, while also dealing with personal problems.

Challenged One's Limits. The intersection of personal and professional challenges pushes teachers to their limits. Informants reflected on how personal struggles with mental health, such as anxiety, intersect with professional challenges, teaching them important lessons about self-awareness and growth. This experience underscores the importance of structure, discipline, and seeking help when needed to manage the heavy loads of both personal and professional life.

3.2.5. Barriers Encountered When Seeking Help for One's Mental Health Concerns

In this section, the themes created were from the responses to specific research question 2.5, 'What barriers do you encounter when seeking help for your mental health concerns? The following were the themes: stigma and introverted personality.

Stigma. Stigma is a significant barrier to seeking mental health support. Informants noted that there is an expectation for teachers to "handle it," and seeking help is sometimes seen as a sign of weakness or unprofessionalism. This stigma, combined with the potential cost and time required for professional assistance, makes it challenging to seek help. Informants also highlighted financial constraints, lack of resources, and the fear of being judged in social or professional settings as barriers.

Introverted Personality. An introverted personality is also a barrier to seeking help. Informants mentioned that their introverted nature and self-reliance make it difficult to reach out for support. This highlights how personal traits influence the willingness to seek help, adding another layer of complexity to addressing mental health concerns.

3.3. How do teachers cope with the challenges of their mental health?

This section presents the results to the 3rd major research question, 'How do teachers cope with the challenges of their mental health?' Five specific research questions were utilized to gather data that would answer the questions on the coping strategies employed to manage stress and anxiety in one's professional lives, the effectiveness of school-based mental health resources or programs in supporting one's coping efforts, the ways peer support networks influence one's coping mechanism, the ways of balancing self-care practices with one's professional responsibilities, and the role professional development plays in helping oneself address mental health challenges.

3.3.1. Coping Strategies Employed to Manage Stress and Anxiety in One's Professional Lives

The results in this section were taken from the responses to the specific research question 3.1, 'What coping strategies do you employ to manage stress and anxiety in your professional lives? The following were the themes drawn from the responses: do enjoyable things, love the job, time management, prioritize self-care, talk with friends and family, and set clear boundaries.

Do Enjoyable Things. Engaging in enjoyable activities is a key coping strategy. Informants emphasized the importance of practicing calmness, leaning on supportive colleagues, and doing things that divert stress from work. Short breaks, such as watching a show, reading a book, or doing breathing exercises, help alleviate stress and maintain mental well-being.

Love the Job. Finding passion in the job and engaging in leisure activities are effective coping mechanisms. Playing musical instruments at school, which is a personal passion, helps refresh the mind and reduce stress.

Time Management. Effective time management is crucial for managing stress and anxiety. Informants mentioned using time management, seeking peer support, setting boundaries, and taking breaks as common strategies. These practices help maintain a balance between professional responsibilities and personal well-being.

Prioritize Self-Care. Prioritizing self-care is essential for mental health. Most teachers employ strategies such as practicing mindfulness and meditation, setting realistic boundaries, and seeking support from family or colleagues. These practices help maintain a healthy work-life balance and reduce stress.

Talk With Friends and Family. Talking with friends and family provides emotional support. Informants pointed out that discussing issues with loved ones helps manage stress and anxiety. This social support network is crucial for maintaining mental health.

Set Clear Boundaries. Setting clear boundaries between work and personal time is vital. Informants emphasized the importance of taking short breaks during the day to breathe and collect oneself. Talking to trusted colleagues and seeking support from a counselor when needed helps manage the mental health challenges associated with teaching.

3.3.2. Effectiveness of School-Based Mental Health Resources or Programs in Supporting One's Coping Efforts

The themes in this section were from the responses to specific question 3.2, 'How effective do you find school-based mental health resources or programs in supporting your coping efforts? The themes were: do not totally lessen the baggage, helped a lot, can provide significant support, and helpful but limited.

Do Not Totally Lessen the Baggage. School-based mental health resources often provide only temporary relief. Informants mentioned that these supports are usually one-time sessions that offer limited help and do not significantly reduce the overall burden. Additionally, the infrequency of these programs, as schools tend to prioritize professional development over mental health initiatives, limits their effectiveness.

Helped A Lot. Even small amounts of support can be meaningful. Informants expressed that any help, regardless of its size, is valuable when dealing with mental health issues.

Can Provide Significant Support. The effectiveness of school-based mental health resources can vary. These programs can be significantly supportive when they are accessible and well-integrated into the school environment. However, their effectiveness can be hindered by constraints such as limited time and funding. Also, these resources are highly effective when they provide tailored support and foster a positive, inclusive environment.

Helpful but Limited. School-based resources are helpful but have limitations. Informants found these resources to offer a safe space to talk, but the support often feels surface-level and not long-term. Inconsistent access due to time constraints and workload further limits their effectiveness. While these programs are a good start, these do not fully meet the depth of support needed by many teachers.

3.3.3. *Ways Peer Support Networks Influence One's Coping Mechanism*

In this section, the themes created were from the responses to specific research question 3.3, 'In what ways do peer support networks influence your coping mechanisms?' The following were the themes: understanding what one goes through, became aware of shared experiences, and overcome stress by sharing laughter with peers.

Understanding What One Goes Through. Peer support is invaluable for many teachers. Talking to coworkers who genuinely understand their experiences makes a significant difference. Simple acts like venting over coffee or going for a walk with a colleague can provide much-needed relief and emotional support.

Became Aware of Shared Experiences. Awareness of shared experiences is a powerful aspect of peer support. Informants noted that knowing peers share similar challenges and learning from their coping strategies provides valid, relevant, and reliable ideas for managing stress. This sense of camaraderie reinforces the importance of mutual support among colleagues.

Overcome Stress by Sharing Laughter with Peers. Sharing laughter and light-hearted moments with peers is an effective stress reliever. Informants mentioned that laughing and joking with colleagues helps cope with stress.

3.3.4. *Ways of Balancing Self-Care Practices with One's Professional Responsibilities*

The themes created in this section were from the responses to the specific research question 3.4, 'How do you balance self-care practices with your professional responsibilities?' The following themes were drawn: limit myself and maintain balance.

Limit Myself. Setting boundaries is crucial for maintaining self-care. Informants emphasized the importance of creating limits, such as dedicating at least an hour to non-work-related activities. Also, scheduling enjoyable activities like reading or taking walks helps manage stress, even though balancing self-care with professional duties can be challenging. Informants also pointed out the need to recognize physical, emotional, and mental limits, ensuring not to bring work home and using leisure time for relaxing activities like playing musical instruments.

Maintain Balance. Maintaining a balance between work and self-care is essential. Taking breaks to engage in hobbies, rest, and mindfulness exercises are effective strategies in balancing self-care practices with one's professional responsibilities. Informants stated that prioritizing personal well-being while efficiently managing tasks helps sustain both productivity and mental health.

Role Professional Development Plays in Helping Oneself Address Mental Health Challenges

This section presents the themes for the specific question 3.5, 'What role does professional development play in helping you address your mental health challenges?' From the responses, the following themes were drawn: reminds self not being alone, helped in handling work more efficiently, provides strategies for stress management, enhances skills, and composes self.

Reminds Self not Being Alone. Professional development sessions focused on mental health are particularly beneficial, noting that these sessions, when practical and relevant, remind teachers that they are not alone in their struggles and provide real strategies to cope. Such training helps manage stress and burnout, reinforces that others face similar challenges, and offers hope for growth through adversity.

Helped in Handling Work More Efficiently. Professional development enhances work efficiency, which alleviates mental health challenges. Informants said that these sessions provide methods to handle work more effectively, which leads to increased competence. This growth in competency results in a more relaxed yet high-quality performance, reducing stress and anxiety.

Provides Strategies for Stress Management. Professional development plays a significant role in stress management. Informants mentioned that these programs offer strategies for managing stress, improving classroom dynamics, and building resilience. These skills are crucial for maintaining mental health in a demanding profession.

Enhances Skills. Skill enhancement through professional development boosts confidence. These sessions enhance skills and boost confidence, which can positively impact mental health by reducing feelings of inadequacy and stress.

Composes Self. Professional development helps in maintaining composure. Informants noted that these programs teach the importance of being calm and modest in words and actions. This composure is essential for managing the pressures of teaching and maintaining mental well-being.

3.4. What are the insights of the teachers that can be shared with others who also experienced challenges in addressing mental health concerns?

This section presents the results to the 4th major research question; ‘What are the insights of the teachers that can be shared with others who also experienced challenges in addressing mental health concerns?’ Five specific research questions were used to gather data and information for this major research question. The questions were intended to gather information on the understanding of the research participants regarding the advice to give for peers struggling with mental health issues, the ways to advocate for better mental health resources in school based on experiences, the lessons learned about self-advocacy and seeking help for mental health challenges, the ways oneself believes one’s experiences can inform policy changes regarding mental health in education, and the ways to suggest building a more supportive and understanding school culture around mental health issues.

3.4.1. Advice to Give for Peers Struggling with Mental Health Issues

The themes in this section were coming from the specific research question 4.1 ‘What advice do you have for your peers who are struggling with mental health issues?’ The responses generated the following themes: choose to speak up, many teachers suffer from mental issues, prioritize self-care, be positive always, pray for guidance, and do not pressure yourself.

Choose to Speak Up. Informants advised co-teachers to never feel incapable of overcoming their current situation. Speaking up and not letting oneself be overwhelmed by thoughts is crucial. Engaging in activities you love and making time for personal life, despite professional challenges, helps maintain a sense of normalcy and well-being.

Many Teachers Suffer from Mental Issues. Feeling overwhelmed is common among teachers. Recognizing that others share similar struggles can be comforting. Setting boundaries, such as learning to say no and not taking work home, is essential for protecting mental space. Small, consistent self-care practices, like enjoying a quiet cup of coffee or taking a short walk, can significantly improve mental health.

Prioritize Self-Care. Informants stressed the importance of prioritizing self-care while being efficient at work. Taking care of oneself enhances teaching effectiveness, so setting boundaries is vital. This approach ensures that personal well-being is not neglected in the pursuit of professional responsibilities.

Be Positive Always. Informants encouraged maintaining a positive outlook and embracing self-compassion. Remembering that you are not alone and that close friends and family are ready to help is important. Keeping a positive mindset and moving forward despite challenges can foster resilience.

Pray for Guidance. Informants suggested engaging in enjoyable activities and praying for guidance, wisdom, and strength daily. This spiritual approach can provide comfort and support, helping to navigate the stresses of professional life.

Do Not Pressure Yourself. Moreover, Informants advised against feeling ashamed of mental health struggles. Talking to someone trusted can be incredibly helpful. Taking things one day at a time and not pressuring oneself to always be okay is important. Also, asking for help is a step toward healing, not a sign of weakness.

3.4.2. Ways to Advocate for Better Mental Health Resources in School Based on Experiences

The themes in this section were coming from the specific research question 4.2 ‘How can you advocate for better mental health resources in your school based on your experiences?’ The responses generated six themes: suggest wellness initiatives, seeking support not a sign of weakness, raising awareness, conduct surveys, by simply being good, and regular mental health training and support.

Suggest Wellness Initiatives. Starting small can lead to significant changes. Informants suggested talking to colleagues, raising concerns during meetings, and proposing wellness initiatives. Honest conversations are the foundation for real change, and these small steps can build momentum for larger mental health initiatives.

Seeking Support not A Sign of Weakness. Promoting the idea that seeking support is a strength is crucial. Informants emphasized encouraging colleagues to view reaching out for help—whether to a therapist, counselor, or trusted friends and family—as a powerful step in self-care. This shift in perspective can reduce stigma and encourage more teachers to seek the help they need.

Raising Awareness. It is vital to share personal experiences and raise awareness about the impact of mental health on both teachers and students. Informants highlighted the importance of collaborating with administration to push for more accessible and effective support systems and professional development focused on mental health. This approach can lead to a more supportive and understanding school environment.

Conduct Surveys. Conducting surveys to identify specific needs is an effective strategy to advocate better mental health. Teachers can propose evidence-based programs or partnerships with mental health professionals based on survey results. This data-driven approach ensures that the initiatives are tailored to the actual needs of the staff.

By Simply Being Good. Maintaining a positive attitude and striving for personal growth can also be a form of advocacy. Informants emphasized the importance of being good, thinking positively, and growing in a positive direction. This mindset can inspire others and contribute to a supportive school culture.

Regular Mental Health Training and Support. It is essential to advocate for regular mental health training and support sessions in school where sharing of personal experiences with colleagues and school leaders is conducted to raise awareness. Pushing for access to professional counseling services within the school and creating an open, supportive environment can significantly improve mental health resources for everyone.

3.4.3. Lessons Learned About Self-Advocacy and Seeking Help for Mental Health Challenges

The themes in this section were coming from the specific research question 4.3. 'What lessons have you learned about self-advocacy and seeking help for mental health challenges?' The responses generated three themes: seeking help necessary, sharing experiences makes one less isolated, and just okay not to be okay.

Seeking Help Necessary. Advocating for oneself is essential for maintaining mental health. Taking mental health days and setting firm boundaries are necessary actions, not selfish ones. Acknowledging one's feelings and setting healthy limitations are crucial steps in self-care. Informants mentioned that knowing when to seek assistance and effectively expressing thoughts can significantly impact long-term well-being and teaching efficacy. Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Sharing Experiences Makes One Less Isolated. Connecting with colleagues who understand can be a lifeline, noting that sharing experiences and receiving support from fellow teachers can reduce feelings of isolation and provide practical coping strategies. This sense of community is invaluable for mental health.

Just Okay Not to Be Okay. Accepting that it is okay not to be okay is a crucial lesson. Informants emphasized the importance of self-containment and being firm in acknowledging that it is normal to have struggles. This acceptance is a key part of self-advocacy and mental health management.

3.4.4. Ways Oneself Believe One's Experiences Can Inform Policy Changes Regarding Mental Health in Education

The themes in this section were coming from the specific research question 4.4. 'In what ways do you believe your experiences can inform policy changes regarding mental health in education?' The responses generated five themes: mental health policy needs to be proactive, helped in putting consideration, draws attentions to practical difficulties, be open to new things, and access to counseling could make a difference.

Mental Health Policy Needs to Be Proactive. Informants underscored that mental health policies should be proactive rather than reactive. Schools need to invest in long-term support systems instead of temporary solutions. This approach acknowledges that teachers are human beings who need to feel genuinely enthusiastic about their jobs to effectively guide and help students unlock their full potential.

Helped in Putting Consideration. Informants mentioned the importance of reminding higher-ups that teachers are individuals with personal lives and family responsibilities. Policies should consider the need for quality time with family and provide flexibility in hectic situations. This consideration helps create a supportive environment where teachers are not treated like programmed robots but as humans needing a spacious and healthy mind environment.

Draws Attentions to Practical Difficulties. Informants suggested that personal experiences can enhance policies by drawing attention to the practical difficulties faced by teachers. Promoting improved support networks and prioritizing mental health resources are essential. Ensuring that training for teachers and students is easily accessible can significantly improve the mental health landscape in schools.

Be Open to New Things. Informants encouraged openness to new ideas and improvements. Recognizing that there are always better ways to support mental health can drive continuous improvement in policies and practices.

Access to Counseling could Make a Difference. Informants stressed the importance of having support systems in place within schools. Many teachers suffer in silence due to stigma or lack of resources. Policies that focus on mental health training, regular check-ins, and access to counseling can make a significant difference. Real change occurs when the system values the well-being of educators as much as academic outcomes.

3.4.5. Ways in Suggesting Building a More Supportive and Understanding School Culture Around Mental Health Issues

The themes in this section were coming from the specific research question 4.5 'How do you suggest building a more supportive and understanding school culture around mental health issues?' The responses generated five themes: develop empathy, provide mental health literacy, establish safe space for teachers and learners, integrate mental health education, and socialize with others.

Develop Empathy. Empathy is the cornerstone of a supportive community. It is important that school leaders recognize burnout symptoms, promote open discussions, and treat mental health with the same seriousness as intellectual and physical health. Reducing teachers' workloads can also alleviate stress, allowing for more genuine connections and fostering a healthier well-being.

Provide Mental Health Literacy. Mental health literacy training is crucial for all staff members. Informants suggested equipping teachers, administrators, and support staff with the knowledge to recognize signs of mental health challenges and respond appropriately. This training can create a more informed and supportive school environment.

Establish Safe Space for Teachers and Learners. Creating safe spaces for open discussions about mental health is essential. It is recommended that conducting regular teacher training, establishing safe spaces for voicing concerns, and integrating mental health education into the school curriculum be implemented to reduce stigma. The need for safe spaces where both students and teachers can talk without fear of judgment is crucial. Simple acts of kindness and regular check-ins can significantly enhance support.

Integrate Mental Health Education. Integrating mental health education into the school curriculum is vital, and making mental health resources accessible to both students and staff is important. This integration ensures that mental health is a consistent part of the educational experience, promoting a culture of understanding and support.

Socialize with Others. Encouraging socialization and support among staff is also important. Informants suggested blending in, enjoying life, and supporting each other when needed. Socializing well can create a positive and supportive school culture.

4. Discussion

This chapter presents the study's discussions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations for understanding teachers' life experiences, challenges, coping techniques, and insights into mental health issues of teachers.

4.1. Structured and Emerging Themes

The structured themes and the emerging therein were made as bases in broadening the discussion of the findings in this study. As each theme was linked to related literature and studies, substantial discussion was made in order to find their alignment with the theme.

Views of Mental Health. The emerging themes were emotional, psychological, and social well-being; stability and stress management; and positive thinking and coping stress. Mental health is defined by the integration of emotional, psychological, and social well-being, emphasizing the importance of managing emotions, cognitive processes, and social interactions. Stability and effective stress management are crucial, as they help maintain emotional balance and prevent stress from escalating into severe issues. Additionally, positive thinking and coping strategies are essential for resilience and overall well-being, enabling individuals to handle life's challenges more effectively. Together, these elements provide a comprehensive understanding of mental health.

The findings of the study support the study of Wasowics et al. (2021) that confirmed the links between emotional elements of mental illness (depression, anxiety, and stress) and mental well-being. They agreed that controlling emotions, cognitive functions, and social relationships is critical to overall well-being. It emphasized the significance of psychological flexibility, stability, and appropriate stress management in preserving mental health. Furthermore, they stressed the importance of positive thinking and coping skills in increasing resilience and general well-being.

Specific Events or Situations That Triggered One's Mental Health Concerns. The emerging themes were meeting deadlines, changes and demands, heavy workload, financial struggles and relationship issues, bad past experiences, managing classes, and dealing with toxic co-workers. Specific events or situations that trigger mental health concerns include meeting deadlines, adjusting to changes, and managing demands, which can lead to stress, especially when support is lacking. A heavy workload, combined with high expectations and additional stressors like large class sizes and inadequate facilities, further exacerbates mental strain.

Moreover, financial struggles and relationship issues are major sources of chronic stress, creating a cycle of anxiety and emotional distress. Negative past experiences, such as childhood trauma or a toxic work environment, have lasting effects on mental health. Managing classes with diverse student needs and dealing with toxic co-workers also contribute to significant mental health challenges, highlighting the complex interplay of various stressors on overall well-being.

The findings of the study support the study of Cheng, et al. (2021) that discovered that the unexpected need to negotiate new expectations and adjustments had a major influence on mental health, causing higher anxiety and despair. They emphasized that dealing with various stressors, such as severe workloads, financial difficulties, and interpersonal problems, enhanced mental stress. They also stressed the long-term consequences of unpleasant prior experiences, as well as the difficulties associated with coping with various student needs and toxic work situations.

Description of One's Daily Routines. The emerging themes were juggling between professional and family concerns, focusing on daily log plan, prioritizing between urgent and important tasks, knowing to keep calm, and meeting the deadline and managing the workload. Teachers face the ongoing challenge of balancing professional and personal responsibilities, requiring significant emotional labor and time management skills. Their daily routines often involve creating detailed Daily Log Plans (DLLs), which demand careful consideration of student performance and iterative pedagogical planning. In addition, prioritizing tasks based on urgency and importance is crucial, with regular breaks incorporated to prevent burnout. Maintaining calmness throughout the day is essential for managing stress and ensuring clear decision-making. Additionally, educators frequently struggle with managing deadlines and heavy workloads, highlighting the need for effective time management and self-care strategies to sustain their well-being and performance.

Hao (2024) validated these findings, concluding that managing many duties and the emotional demands of teaching had a major impact on teachers' well-being and performance. To avoid burnout, it is critical to practice effective time management, prioritize tasks, and take regular breaks. The author underlined the need of remaining cool and making clear decisions in order to properly manage stress.

Impact of Mental Health on Work-life Balance. The emerging themes were harder to stay focused, blurring the lines between work and personal life, and impacting both personal well-being and workplace performance. Mental health issues, such as anxiety, significantly impact focus and enthusiasm, affecting both professional performance and personal time. This highlights the necessity of maintaining a balance to sustain productivity and well-being in both domains. Moreover, professional demands often blur the lines between work and personal life, especially for teachers, due to constant connectivity and extended working hours. This lack of clear separation increases stress and fatigue, negatively impacting mental health and overall work-life balance. Consequently, mental health issues can lead to exhaustion and a lack of focus, making it challenging to manage workloads and meet deadlines. Effective mental health strategies are crucial for ensuring both personal well-being and professional success.

According to Reinke, et al. (2024), the increasing use of work-related technologies after hours blurs the boundaries between work and personal life, impairing recovery and increasing stress and fatigue. Constant connectivity and extended working hours negatively impact mental health and overall work-life balance. They also emphasized the importance of effective boundary management strategies to maintain mental well-being and productivity.

Perception on the Support Systems Available Within School. The emerging themes were only surface-level, very sufficient, inconsistent, life, uncertain, and approachable. Perceptions of support systems within schools vary widely among informants. Some view these systems as surface-level, noting that while resources like counselors and wellness talks are available, they often fail to address deeper issues due to the practical demands of teaching. Others find the support system very sufficient, citing the helpfulness of senior teachers, ample resources, and a supportive School Head, though they acknowledge room for improvement. However, some describe the support as inconsistent, with inadequate mental health resources and administrative understanding leading to feelings of being unsupported. Additionally, a philosophical approach to support emphasizes adaptability and openness to life's uncertainties. The approachability and willingness of co-teachers to assist with academic queries and provide advice are valued, contributing positively to the overall perception of the support system.

According to Zang et al. (2023), while certain support systems are considered as adequate, others are viewed as inconsistent or surface-level, reflecting the diverse perceptions of informants. It emphasized that tools such as counselors and wellness talks frequently fail to address deeper concerns due to the practical needs of education. They did, however, emphasize the good influence of helping senior instructors, abundant resources, and supportive school leaders, but they admitted there is space for improvement. Perceptions of support networks inside schools range greatly, underlining the need for more consistent and comprehensive mental health resources.

Understanding of Colleagues and Administration on Mental Health Concerns. The emerging themes were unable to reach out for help, overwhelming, heavy workloads contribute to mental stress, some understand; some do not, unload emotional baggage to colleagues, and colleagues not fully understand. The understanding of mental health concerns among colleagues and administration is mixed. Some colleagues empathize due to shared experiences, while others fail to grasp the situation, and the administration often misinterprets stress as laziness, making it difficult for teachers to seek help. The overwhelming nature of additional paperwork and event preparations further hinders basic duties, though supportive school heads can mitigate some stress. Similarly, heavy workloads assigned by the administration exacerbate mental stress, highlighting the need for better recognition of teachers' mental health needs. While some colleagues are supportive, others do not fully understand the impact of mental health issues, emphasizing the need for increased awareness and open communication. Sharing concerns with colleagues can help unload emotional baggage, but the administration's focus on performance over well-being limits discussions on mental health, indicating a need for more comprehensive support systems.

Rooney, et al. (2024) argued that while some colleagues and administrators are supportive and empathic, others fail to recognize the impact of mental health concerns, frequently misinterpreting stress as laziness. The understanding of mental health concerns among coworkers and administrators is uneven. The overwhelming nature of additional paperwork and event preparations impedes fundamental tasks and increases mental stress. Better understanding of teachers' mental health needs, as well as the necessity of enhanced knowledge and open communication, supports the urge for more comprehensive support networks.

Ways Shift to Online or Hybrid Teaching Environments Affected One's Mental Health. The emerging themes were overwhelming, took it as a challenge, negatively affected one's mental health, mixed impact, and mentally exhausting. The transition to online and hybrid teaching environments has been overwhelming for many teachers, with initial difficulties in navigating new technologies and managing virtual classes. Despite being tech-savvy, the constant pressure to engage students and meet evaluation standards was exhausting. For some, the shift presented an opportunity for growth, allowing them to learn new skills and develop new teaching strategies. However, the shift negatively impacted others' mental health due to the demands of using various online platforms, lack of face-to-face interaction, poor internet connectivity, and unfamiliarity with digital tools, leading to significant stress and frustration. The impact has been mixed, with some appreciating the increased flexibility and improved work-life balance, while others struggled with adapting to new environments. The blurred lines between work and personal life made it difficult for many to disconnect and relax, adding to their anxiety and highlighting the mentally exhausting nature of the transition.

Gudoniene et al. (2025) confirmed the findings by emphasizing the obstacles that teachers encounter in hybrid teaching contexts, such as technology issues, time management difficulties, and the mental strain of adjusting to new teaching methods. They noted that the impact on teachers was uneven, with some experiencing growth and skill development while others encountered severe stress as a result of online platform expectations and a lack of face-to-face engagement.

Mental Health Issues Currently Facing. The emerging themes were anxiety, learners' behavior, and concerns from pupils and parents. Teachers are currently facing significant mental health issues, with anxiety being a prevalent concern. Informants shared experiences of anxiety, emotional exhaustion, burnout, and depression, which severely impact job satisfaction and physical health. The emotional toll of teaching, coupled with stress and self-doubt, affects teachers' well-being and the education system as a whole. Additionally, managing learners' behavior and the lack of educational resources add to

the stress, highlighting the need for a supportive learning environment. Concerns from pupils and parents further exacerbate mental health issues, with external pressures and expectations adding complexity to teachers' professional responsibilities.

According to Agyapong et al. (2022), burnout, stress, anxiety, and depression are common among teachers, and these conditions have a significant impact on job satisfaction and physical health. They stated that the emotional toll of teaching, compounded by stress and self-doubt, has an impact on both teachers' well-being and the education system as a whole. They added that managing student behavior and the lack of educational resources are key stressors. Moreover, external pressures from pupils and parents exacerbate mental health issues, adding complexity to teachers' professional responsibilities.

Ways Workload Demands and Job Stressors Contribute to One's Mental Health Challenges. The emerging themes were managing everything stressful, and mental fatigue, excessive workloads. Workload demands and job stressors significantly contribute to mental health challenges for educators. Managing multiple responsibilities simultaneously creates overwhelming stress and anxiety, leaving little time for personal enjoyment. The relentless pace and high expectations lead to considerable mental fatigue, affecting overall well-being and making it difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Excessive workloads often require overtime work, resulting in both physical and mental exhaustion and leaving little time for self-care. These narratives highlight the significant mental strain associated with teaching and emphasize the need for supportive measures to help manage these challenges.

Workload demands and job stresses are key contributors to teachers' mental health issues, demonstrating how juggling several obligations simultaneously causes overwhelming stress and anxiety. The unrelenting pace and high expectations cause significant mental weariness, compromising general well-being and making it difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Furthermore, severe workloads frequently necessitate overtime labor, which causes physical and emotional exhaustion and leaves little time for self-care (Morris, et al., 2025).

Ways External Factors Impact One's Mental Health. The emerging themes were disrespectful behaviors can impact mental health, unsurmountable amount of paper works, causes stress and burnout, and behavior of people around. External factors significantly impact teachers' mental health. Disrespectful behaviors from students and parents add pressure and make teachers feel judged and misunderstood, affecting their self-esteem and limiting their ability to learn from mistakes. Further, the overwhelming amount of paperwork exacerbates stress and mental fatigue, highlighting the administrative burdens teachers face. Societal expectations and learners' behaviors can lead to stress and burnout, especially when personal goals do not align with external responsibilities. Additionally, conflicts and problematic behaviors among colleagues contribute to stress, while societal expectations and the behavior of those around them often lead to anxiety, self-doubt, and fatigue. These factors underscore the pervasive influence of external pressures on teachers' mental well-being.

Corrente, et al. (2022) demonstrated how external factors, such as disrespectful behavior from students and parents, have a significant impact on teachers' mental health by increasing pressure and making them feel judged and misunderstood. The overwhelming amount of paperwork increases stress and mental fatigue, emphasizing teachers' administrative burdens. Additionally, societal expectations and learners' behaviors are key contributors to stress and burnout, especially when personal goals do not align with external responsibilities.

Ways Personal Life Circumstances Intersect with One's Personal Challenges Related to Mental Health. The emerging themes were overwhelming, adds frustration, difficult to ask for help, increases the feeling of burnout, negatively affected, and challenged one's limit. Personal life circumstances, such as family problems and financial stress, can significantly compound the stress experienced at work, leading to a constant state of stress and exhaustion. In addition, the intersection of personal and professional challenges adds frustration and anxiety, often forcing teachers to suppress their emotions and maintain a facade of excellence. The stigma associated with mental health issues makes it difficult for teachers to seek help, exacerbating the challenges they face. Personal responsibilities can increase feelings of burnout and negatively affect professional performance, making it difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance. This dual burden can push individuals to their limits, highlighting the importance of structure, discipline, and seeking help to manage both personal and professional challenges effectively.

According to Doan, et al. (2024), personal life conditions such as family issues and financial stress exacerbate work-related stress, resulting in a permanent state of tension and tiredness. They also state that the combination of personal and professional issues increases irritation and worry, leading instructors to repress their emotions and maintain a veneer of brilliance. Aside from that, they observed that personal duties might exacerbate feelings of burnout and have a detrimental impact on professional performance, making it difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Barriers Encountered When Seeking Help for One's Mental Health Concerns. The emerging themes were stigma and introverted personality. Barriers to seeking help for mental health concerns include stigma and personal traits. Stigma is a significant barrier, with expectations for teachers to "handle it" and seeking help seen as a sign of weakness or unprofessionalism. Financial constraints, lack of resources, and fear of judgment further complicate seeking professional assistance. Informants expressed shame and fear of being labeled as "broken" or "dramatic," making them hesitant to share their struggles. Additionally, an introverted personality can hinder reaching out for support, as self-reliance and introversion make it challenging to seek help. These barriers highlight the complexity of addressing mental health concerns among educators.

A recent study by Kashyap, et al. (2024) examined the mental health challenges faced by teachers, revealing that 59.4% of participants exhibited elevated anxiety and depression scores, with 37.4% experiencing comorbid symptoms. They highlighted that stigma remains a significant barrier, as many teachers expressed discomfort with the idea of working or living alongside individuals with mental health issues. Teachers often feel compelled to "handle it" themselves, perceiving help-seeking as a weakness. Additionally, they noted that personal traits, such as introversion, can hinder teachers from seeking support, further complicating efforts to address mental health concerns within the profession.

Coping Strategies Employed to Manage Stress and Anxiety in One's Professional Lives. The emerging themes were do enjoyable things, love the job, time management, prioritize self-care, talk with friends and family, and set clear boundaries. Teachers employ various coping strategies to manage stress and anxiety in their professional lives. Engaging in enjoyable activities, such as watching shows, reading, or doing breathing exercises, helps alleviate stress. Finding passion in the job and enjoying leisure activities, like playing musical instruments, refreshes the mind. Furthermore, effective time management, setting boundaries, and taking breaks are crucial for maintaining balance. Prioritizing self-care through mindfulness, meditation, and seeking support from family or colleagues is essential. Talking with friends and family provides emotional support, and setting clear boundaries between work and personal time helps manage mental health challenges. These strategies collectively contribute to maintaining well-being and reducing stress.

Homann, et al. (2025) concluded that engaging in enjoyable activities, such as watching shows, reading, or doing breathing exercises, helps alleviate stress. Also, effective time management, setting boundaries, and taking breaks are crucial for maintaining balance. Furthermore, prioritizing self-care through mindfulness, meditation, and seeking support from family or colleagues was essential for maintaining well-being and reducing stress.

Effectiveness of School-Based Mental Health Resources or Programs in Supporting One's Coping Efforts. The emerging themes were do not totally lessen the baggage, helped a lot, can provide significant support, and helpful but limited. The effectiveness of school-based mental health resources varies widely. Some informants find these supports to be only temporarily relieving, as they often consist of one-time sessions that do not significantly reduce the overall burden. The infrequency of these programs, due to schools prioritizing professional development over mental health initiatives, further limits their effectiveness. However, even small amounts of support are seen as valuable, highlighting the importance of having some form of assistance available. When accessible and well-integrated, these programs can provide significant support, especially if they offer tailored help and foster a positive, inclusive environment. Nonetheless, many find these resources to be somewhat helpful but limited, offering only surface-level support and being hindered by time constraints and workload. This underscores the need for more consistent, comprehensive, and well-integrated mental health support systems in schools.

Dinnen et al. (2024) found that while some teachers reported temporary relief from one-time mental health sessions, these interventions often lacked the frequency and depth needed for sustained impact. The infrequency of such programs, often due to schools prioritizing professional development over mental health initiatives, further limited their effectiveness. However, even minimal support was valued by teachers, underscoring the importance of having some form of assistance available. They concluded that for school-based mental health programs to be truly effective, they must be consistent, comprehensive, and well-integrated into the school environment, which offers tailored support and fosters a positive, inclusive atmosphere.

Ways Peer Support Networks Influence One's Coping Mechanism. The emerging themes were understanding what one goes through, became aware of shared experiences, and overcome stress by sharing laughter with peers. The effectiveness of school-based mental health resources varies widely. Some informants find these supports to be only temporarily relieving, as they often consist of one-time sessions that do not significantly reduce the overall burden. The infrequency of these programs, due to schools prioritizing professional development over mental health initiatives, further limits their effectiveness. Nevertheless, even small amounts of support are seen as valuable, highlighting the importance of having some form of assistance available. When accessible and well-integrated, these programs can provide significant support, especially if they offer tailored help and foster a positive, inclusive environment. Nonetheless, many find these resources to be somewhat helpful but limited, offering only surface-level support and being hindered by time constraints and workload. This underscores the need for more consistent, comprehensive, and well-integrated mental health support systems in schools.

Rooney and Buckley (2024) pointed out that while some programs offer temporary relief, their infrequent implementation and focus on one-time sessions limit their long-term impact. Schools often prioritize professional development over mental health initiatives, further reducing the frequency and effectiveness of these programs. Despite these limitations, even minimal support was found to be valuable, emphasizing the importance of having some form of assistance available.

Ways of Balancing Self-Care Practices with One's Professional Responsibilities. The emerging themes were limit myself and maintain balance. Teachers employ various strategies to balance self-care with professional responsibilities. Setting boundaries is crucial, with informants emphasizing the importance of dedicating time to non-work-related activities and recognizing physical, emotional, and mental limits. Engaging in enjoyable activities, such as reading, taking walks, or playing musical instruments, helps manage stress. Additionally, maintaining balance involves taking breaks for hobbies, rest, and mindfulness exercises, ensuring that personal well-being is prioritized alongside professional tasks. Recognizing the connection between mental and physical health is essential for sustaining productivity and happiness. Setting clear boundaries, like not checking work messages after a certain time, and taking moments to breathe and reset, are key strategies for managing stress and maintaining a healthy work-life balance. These approaches underscore the importance of holistic well-being in effectively balancing self-care with professional duties.

Jennings et al. (2024) investigated the impact of mindfulness-based interventions on teachers' well-being and disclosed that teachers who participated in mindfulness programs reported significant reductions in stress and burnout, as well as improvements in emotional regulation and overall well-being. They stated that self-care strategies, such as setting boundaries, engaging in enjoyable activities, and practicing mindfulness, are crucial to manage stress and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Role Professional Development Plays in Helping Oneself Address Mental Health Challenges. The emerging themes were reminds self not being alone, helped in handling work more efficiently, provides strategies for stress management, enhances skills, and composes self. Professional development plays a crucial role in addressing mental health challenges by providing practical strategies and reminding educators that they are not alone in their struggles. These sessions help manage stress and burnout, offering hope for growth through adversity. They enhance work efficiency and competency, leading to a more relaxed and high-quality performance, which reduces stress and anxiety. More so, professional development programs offer strategies for stress management, improve classroom dynamics, and build resilience, all of which are essential for maintaining mental health. Skill enhancement

through these sessions boosts confidence, reducing feelings of inadequacy and stress. Furthermore, they teach the importance of maintaining composure, which is vital for managing the pressures of teaching and sustaining mental well-being.

Comora and Oco (2025) mentioned that while teachers experienced high levels of stress due to workload and student behavior, they also demonstrated very high resilience levels. This resilience was significantly influenced by professional development programs that provided practical strategies for stress management, improved classroom dynamics, and enhanced teachers' confidence and composure. The professional development in addressing mental health challenges, such as programs that equip teachers with the tools to manage stress and burnout effectively leads to improved well-being and job performance.

Advice to Give for Peers Struggling with Mental Health Issues. The emerging themes were choose to speak up, many teachers suffer from mental issues, prioritize self-care, be positive always, pray for guidance, and do not pressure yourself. Peers struggling with mental health issues are advised to speak up and not let themselves be overwhelmed by thoughts, engaging in activities they love to maintain well-being. Recognizing that many teachers share similar struggles can be comforting, and setting boundaries, such as saying no and not taking work home, is essential for protecting mental space. In addition, prioritizing self-care while being efficient at work enhances teaching effectiveness, ensuring personal well-being is not neglected. Maintaining a positive outlook, embracing self-compassion, and remembering that close friends and family are ready to help fosters resilience. Engaging in enjoyable activities and praying for guidance can provide comfort and support. It's important not to feel ashamed of mental health struggles, to talk to someone trusted, and to take things one day at a time, understanding that asking for help is a step toward healing, not a sign of weakness.

According to Sewell (2024), teachers who engaged in activities they enjoyed, set clear boundaries between work and personal life, and sought support from friends and family were better equipped to manage stress and maintain well-being. Speaking up about mental health struggles, embracing self-compassion, and engaging in enjoyable activities can foster resilience among teachers. Acknowledging mental health challenges and seeking help are steps toward healing, not signs of weakness.

Ways to Advocate for Better Mental Health Resources in School Based on Experiences. The emerging themes were suggest wellness initiatives, seeking support not a sign of weakness, raising awareness, conduct surveys , by simply being good, and regular mental health training and support. Advocating for better mental health resources in schools involves several strategies. Starting with small initiatives, such as discussing concerns with colleagues and proposing wellness programs, can build momentum for larger changes. Promoting the idea that seeking support is a strength helps reduce stigma and encourages more teachers to seek help. Raising awareness by sharing personal experiences and collaborating with administration can lead to more accessible and effective support systems. Moreover, conducting surveys to identify specific needs ensures that initiatives are tailored to staff requirements. Maintaining a positive attitude and striving for personal growth can inspire others and contribute to a supportive school culture. Regular mental health training and support sessions, along with access to professional counseling services, are essential for creating an open and supportive environment. These strategies emphasize proactive advocacy, open communication, and tailored support to improve mental health resources in schools.

Tome, et al. (2024) disclosed that training not only enhanced teachers' skills in supporting student mental health but also improved their own mental health and well-being. Better mental health resources in schools such as strategies like initiating wellness programs, promoting open discussions about mental health, and encouraging self-care among teachers should be available. By equipping teachers with the necessary tools and support, schools can foster a more supportive and inclusive environment that benefits both teachers and students.

Lessons Learned About Self-Advocacy and Seeking Help for Mental Health Challenges. The emerging themes were seeking help necessary, sharing experiences makes one less isolated, and just okay not to be okay. Advocating for oneself and seeking help are essential for maintaining mental health. Informants emphasized the importance of taking mental health days, setting firm boundaries, and acknowledging one's feelings as necessary actions for self-care. Knowing when to seek assistance and effectively expressing thoughts can significantly impact long-term well-being and teaching efficacy. In addition, self-advocacy and seeking help require courage and clear communication, and these actions are vital steps towards healing and growth. Speaking up about mental health struggles allows teachers to better support their students and reinforces that they are not alone. Sharing experiences with colleagues can reduce feelings of isolation and provide practical coping strategies, creating a valuable sense of community. Accepting that it is okay not to be okay is a crucial lesson, as it normalizes struggles and is a key part of self-advocacy and mental health management.

Turgeon-Brown (2025) stated that it is important for teachers to have self-care practices. When teachers take mental health days and openly discuss their struggles, it not only aids their personal well-being but also fosters a supportive community among colleagues. Self-advocacy and seeking help are vital steps toward healing and growth. By sharing experiences and coping strategies, teachers can reduce feelings of isolation and reinforce the notion that it's acceptable to seek support, which will ultimately enhance their teaching efficacy and resilience.

Ways Oneself Believe One's Experiences Can Inform Policy Changes Regarding Mental Health in Education. The emerging themes were mental health policy needs to be proactive, helped in putting consideration, draws attentions to practical difficulties, be open to new things, and access to counseling could make a difference. Teachers believe their experiences can inform policy changes regarding mental health in education by emphasizing the need for proactive, long-term support systems rather than temporary solutions. Policies should consider teachers' personal lives and family responsibilities, providing flexibility and creating a supportive environment. More so, personal experiences can highlight practical difficulties, promoting improved support networks and prioritizing mental health resources. Advocating for inclusive, proactive mental health initiatives ensures policies address real-world challenges. Openness to new ideas and continuous improvement in mental health support can drive better practices. Access to counseling, regular check-ins, and mental health training are crucial, as real change occurs when the system values educators' well-being as much as academic outcomes.

Doan et al. (2024) corroborated the findings emphasizing the importance of long-term support systems and highlighting the need for policies that consider teachers' personal lives and family responsibilities. They underscored the value of personal experiences in identifying practical difficulties and promoting improved support networks. They concluded that inclusive, proactive mental health initiatives that address real-world challenges is crucial, and emphasized the importance of access to counseling, regular check-ins, and mental health training.

Ways in Suggesting Building a More Supportive and Understanding School Culture Around Mental Health Issues. The emerging themes were develop empathy, provide mental health literacy, establish safe space for teachers and learners, integrate mental health education, and socialize with others. Building a more supportive and understanding school culture around mental health issues involves several key strategies. Developing empathy is crucial, with leaders recognizing burnout symptoms, promoting open discussions, and treating mental health with the same seriousness as intellectual and physical health. In addition, providing mental health literacy training for all staff members equips them to recognize and respond to mental health challenges, creating a more informed and supportive environment. Establishing safe spaces for open discussions about mental health and integrating mental health education into the curriculum helps reduce stigma and fosters a culture of understanding. Encouraging socialization and support among staff, along with regular check-ins and simple acts of kindness, enhances the overall support system. These strategies collectively contribute to a positive and supportive school culture that prioritizes mental well-being.

Schlag et al. (2024) suggested that schools should implement initiatives that develop empathy, recognize burnout symptoms, and promote open discussions about mental health among school leaders and teachers. Schools should be effective in providing mental health literacy training to school personnel to create a more informed and supportive environment. The value of establishing safe spaces for open discussions and integrating mental health education into the curriculum reduces stigma and foster a culture of understanding.

4.2. Implications for Practice

Based on the findings, the following implications for practice are offered.

On Views of Mental Health. The findings underscore the need for schools and educational leaders to integrate mental health support into teacher development programs. School leaders may emphasize emotional regulation, stress management, and psychological resilience. Promoting a work environment that nurtures social connectedness and encourages positive coping strategies can mitigate burnout and foster overall well-being among educators. Embedding these practices into institutional policies and teacher wellness initiatives can lead to more sustainable teaching environments and improved professional satisfaction.

On Specific Events or Situations That Triggered One's Mental Health Concerns. The research findings indicate that meeting deadlines, adjusting to changes, and managing demands are significant stressors, especially when support is lacking. To address these concerns, it is critical for teachers to develop structured support systems that provide clear instructions and tools for managing workloads and deadlines. Furthermore, school heads are encouraged to provide professional development opportunities focused on stress management and resilience that can help teachers handle changes and demands more effectively.

On Description of One's Daily Routines. It can be reckoned that teachers face the ongoing challenge of balancing professional and personal responsibilities, requiring significant emotional labor and time management skills. It is critical for school heads to provide teachers with appropriate professional development in efficient time management and self-care practices to address these issues. Also, providing a supportive work atmosphere that recognizes the demands on teachers and provides stress management options will help them maintain their well-being and productivity.

On Impact of Mental Health on Work-life Balance. It can be recalled that mental health issues, such as anxiety, significantly impact focus and enthusiasm, affecting both professional performance and personal time. To address these challenges, it is essential for teachers to implement effective mental health strategies that promote a clear separation between work and personal life, such as setting boundaries and encouraging regular breaks. Additionally, school heads may provide resources and support for managing mental health that can help sustain productivity and well-being in both domains.

On Perception on the Support Systems Available Within School. The research findings indicate that perceptions of support systems within schools vary widely, with some viewing them as surface-level and inconsistent, while others find them very sufficient. Hence, schools should enhance the depth and consistency of mental health resources and administrative support. Aside from that, fostering a culture of adaptability and openness, along with encouraging the approachability and willingness of co-teachers, can improve the overall perception and effectiveness of the support system.

On Understanding of Colleagues and Administration on Mental Health Concerns. The findings revealed a mixed understanding of mental health concerns among teachers and administration, with some empathizing and others failing to grasp the situation. To address these issues, the school must increase awareness and have open communication about mental health within the school environment. Also, better recognition of teachers' mental health needs by the administration and the implementation of comprehensive support systems can help mitigate stress and improve overall well-being.

On Ways Shift to Online or Hybrid Teaching Environments Affected One's Mental Health. It can be recalled that the transition to online and hybrid teaching environments has been overwhelming and mentally exhausting for many teachers. Hence, the shift to online and hybrid teaching environments necessitates providing robust mental health support for teachers, including training in digital tools and strategies for maintaining work-life balance. Schools may also consider flexible policies to accommodate individual needs and mitigate stress to ensure a supportive and adaptable teaching environment.

On Mental Health Issues Currently Facing. Informants disclosed that anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and burnout are prevalent among teachers, exacerbated by managing learners' behavior and concerns from pupils and parents. To address the significant mental health issues faced by teachers, schools should implement comprehensive mental health programs, including regular counseling and stress management workshops. Besides, providing adequate resources and support for managing learners' behavior, along with clear communication channels for addressing concerns from pupils and parents, can help alleviate the pressures and improve teachers' overall well-being.

On Ways Workload Demands and Job Stressors Contribute to One's Mental Health Challenges. It can be reckoned that excessive workloads and job stressors lead to significant mental fatigue and stress for educators. To mitigate the mental health challenges posed by excessive workloads and job stressors, school institutions should implement workload management strategies and provide mental health resources. Encouraging regular breaks, promoting a healthy work-life balance, and offering professional development on stress management can help teachers maintain their well-being and effectiveness.

On Ways External Factors Impact One's Mental Health. The research findings show that disrespectful behaviors, overwhelming paperwork, and societal expectations significantly impact teachers' mental health. To address the impact of external factors on teachers' mental health, schools should foster a respectful and supportive environment, involving students, parents, and colleagues. Aside from that, schools should reduce administrative burdens and provide mental health resources to help teachers alleviate stress and prevent burnout to ensure teachers' well-being and effectiveness.

On Ways Personal Life Circumstances Intersect with One's Personal Challenges Related to Mental Health. Informants revealed that personal life circumstances, such as family problems and financial stress, compound work-related stress, leading to burnout. Creating a supportive environment that encourages open communication about mental health can help teachers manage the dual burden of personal and professional challenges. Also, providing access to mental health resources and promoting a culture that reduces stigma around seeking help are essential for maintaining teachers' well-being and effectiveness.

On Barriers Encountered When Seeking Help for One's Mental Health Concerns. The findings highlighted that stigma and personal traits, such as introversion, hinder teachers from seeking help for mental health concerns. With this, schools should promote a culture that normalizes seeking help and reduces stigma, which is crucial for supporting teachers' mental health. Teachers should be provided with accessible mental health resources, and work in a safe, non-judgmental environment that can encourage teachers to seek the assistance they need.

On Coping Strategies Employed to Manage Stress and Anxiety in One's Professional Lives. It can be recalled that teachers use various coping strategies, such as engaging in enjoyable activities, effective time management, and prioritizing self-care. To effectively manage stress and anxiety in professional lives, teachers should integrate enjoyable activities, effective time management, and self-care practices into their routines. Additionally, setting clear boundaries and seeking support from friends and family are crucial for maintaining mental well-being and reducing stress.

On Effectiveness of School-Based Mental Health Resources or Programs in Supporting One's Coping Efforts. Teachers shared that while school-based mental health resources can provide significant support, they are often limited and inconsistent. To enhance the effectiveness of school-based mental health resources, schools should integrate these programs more consistently and comprehensively, ensuring they provide ongoing support rather than one-time sessions. Tailoring these programs to individual needs and fostering a positive, inclusive environment can significantly improve their impact.

On Ways Peer Support Networks Influence One's Coping Mechanism. The findings suggested that peer support networks are valuable in helping teachers cope with stress by providing understanding and shared experiences. Peer support networks are vital for coping with stress, as they provide understanding, shared experiences, and emotional relief through social interactions. Encouraging regular peer interactions and creating a supportive community can help individuals manage stress more effectively.

On Ways of Balancing Self-Care Practices with One's Professional Responsibilities. It was indicated that setting boundaries and engaging in enjoyable activities are crucial for balancing self-care with professional responsibilities. These requires setting clear boundaries and dedicating time to non-work-related activities. Prioritizing personal well-being through enjoyable activities and mindfulness practices is essential for maintaining productivity and happiness.

On Role Professional Development Plays in Helping Oneself Address Mental Health Challenges. It can be recalled that professional development provides practical strategies for stress management and enhances skills, which helps address mental health challenges. Professional development programs play a crucial role in addressing mental health challenges by offering practical stress management strategies and enhancing work efficiency. These programs also provide a sense of community and support, which helps teachers manage stress and build resilience.

On Advice to Give for Peers Struggling with Mental Health Issues. The results revealed that speaking up, prioritizing self-care, and setting boundaries are crucial for managing mental health. Schools should encourage teachers to speak up about their mental health struggles and prioritize self-care can significantly improve their well-being and resilience. Recognizing shared struggles and setting boundaries are essential for maintaining mental health and preventing burnout.

On Ways to Advocate for Better Mental Health Resources in School Based on Experiences. Teachers suggested that advocating for wellness initiatives, raising awareness, and conducting surveys are effective strategies. With this, schools should advocate better mental health resources, which involve promoting wellness initiatives, reducing stigma around seeking support, and conducting surveys to tailor programs to teachers needs. Regular mental health training and open communication with administration can lead to more effective and accessible support systems.

On Lessons Learned About Self-Advocacy and Seeking Help for Mental Health Challenges. Informants highlighted the importance of taking mental health days, setting boundaries, and sharing experiences. Self-advocacy and seeking help are crucial for maintaining mental health, as they reduce feelings of isolation and provide practical coping strategies. Normalizing the idea that it's okay not to be okay fosters a supportive community and encourages individuals to seek the help they need.

On Ways Oneself Believe One's Experiences Can Inform Policy Changes Regarding Mental Health in Education. The findings emphasized the need for proactive, long-term support systems and policies that consider teachers' personal lives. Teachers' experiences can inform proactive mental health policies that provide long-term support and consider personal and professional responsibilities. Access to counseling, regular check-ins, and continuous improvement in mental health initiatives are vital for creating a supportive educational environment.

On Ways in Suggesting Building a More Supportive and Understanding School Culture Around Mental Health Issues. It can be recalled that developing empathy, providing mental health literacy, and establishing safe spaces are key strategies. Schools should build a supportive school culture around mental health, which involves developing empathy, providing mental health literacy training, and creating safe spaces for open discussions. Integrating mental health education and encouraging socialization among teachers can reduce stigma and promote a positive, understanding environment.

4.3. Implications for Future Research

Given that the study was limited to the responses of public elementary teachers in New Bataan District, Davao de Oro, the following recommendations for future research are proposed:

First, future research may include a different group of public elementary school teachers from the same district. Second, identical research might be undertaken in a different area to investigate the same phenomenon to understand teachers' lived experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms in relation to mental health issues. Third, re-interviewing the same research participants over time may indicate changes in their perceptions of mental health issues. Fourth, since this study was conducted in a public elementary school, further research could investigate the same phenomenon in private elementary schools. Finally, as the findings reflect the perspectives of the selected public elementary school teachers, another study could explore the understanding of mental health issues among the school heads of New Bataan District, Davao de Oro.

4.4. Concluding Remarks

The study explored the lived experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights of six teachers in New Bataan District, Davao de Oro, focusing on their mental health challenges. The findings revealed that mental health encompasses emotional, psychological, and social well-being, with stability and stress management being crucial components. Teachers identified specific stress triggers, such as meeting deadlines, heavy workloads, financial struggles, and managing diverse classroom behaviors. These stressors significantly impact their mental health, highlighting the need for effective coping strategies and support systems.

Moreover, daily routines of teachers involve juggling professional and personal responsibilities, emphasizing the importance of time management and emotional regulation. Teachers often struggle to maintain a work-life balance, with blurred boundaries between work and personal life exacerbating stress. The impact of mental health on work-life balance is profound, affecting both personal well-being and professional performance. Teachers emphasized the necessity of mental health management to sustain productivity and overall well-being.

In addition, the study also examined the effectiveness of school-based mental health resources, which were found to be helpful but limited. While some teachers appreciated the support from colleagues and school heads, others found the resources to be surface-level and inconsistent. Peer support networks emerged as a valuable coping mechanism, providing emotional validation, shared experiences, and practical advice. Teachers highlighted the importance of having a supportive community to navigate mental health challenges effectively.

Further, the role of professional development in addressing mental health challenges was underscored. Professional development sessions that focus on mental health provide practical strategies, enhance work efficiency, and offer a sense of community. Teachers advised peers to speak up about their struggles, prioritize self-care, and seek support. They also advocated for better mental health resources in schools, emphasizing the need for proactive policies, regular mental health training, and access to counseling services. These underscore the importance of comprehensive support systems and a supportive school culture in promoting teachers' mental well-being.

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