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# Climate and Classroom Behavior on the Mental Health of Special Needs Education Teachers

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**Abstract**

Teacher mental health has become an important concern in educational settings, particularly among Special Needs Education (SNED) teachers who work with learners with diverse academic, behavioral, and emotional needs. This study examined the relationship among classroom climate, student behavior, stress levels, effects of stress, and coping strategies of SNED teachers in the Division of Mandaue City for School Year 2025–2026. Specifically, the study determined the level of stress experienced by teachers, the effects of stress, coping strategies utilized, classroom climate, perceived student behavior, and the relationships among the identified variables. The findings served as the basis for developing an Intervention and Support System Framework for SNED teachers. The study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design. Complete enumeration was employed involving 37 SPED teachers from selected public schools in the Division of Mandaue City. Standardized and adapted questionnaires were used to gather data on stress, coping strategies, classroom climate, and student behavior. Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Results revealed that teachers experienced a moderate level of stress, primarily associated with difficulties in addressing diverse learner needs, heavy workload, and instructional demands. However, the effects of stress were generally seldom experienced, indicating that severe psychological symptoms were not strongly manifested among the respondents. Teachers demonstrated highly effective coping strategies characterized by adaptability, optimism, innovation, perseverance, and continuous professional learning. Student behavior was generally evident, with prosocial behavior emerging as the most prominent characteristic. Teachers also exhibited good instructional practices that contributed to a generally positive classroom climate. Correlation analysis showed that coping strategies had a significant negative relationship with stress level and a significant positive relationship with classroom climate. The study concludes that effective coping mechanisms play a significant role in reducing teacher stress and promoting positive classroom environments. Based on the findings, the CARE Framework (Coping, Assistance, Resilience, and Engagement Framework) was developed as a sustainable intervention and support system aimed at enhancing the mental health and well-being of SPED teachers.

**Keywords:** *classroom climate, coping strategies, mental health, SPED teachers, stress level*

## Introduction

The mental health of teachers has increasingly become a critical concern in education systems worldwide, particularly among special education (SPED) teachers who work in highly demanding and complex classroom environments. Teaching learners with diverse needs requires not only strong pedagogical skills but also emotional resilience, patience, and continuous adaptation to individualized learning conditions. Recent studies highlight that teachers are at greater risk of experiencing stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion due to workload demands, behavioral challenges, and limited institutional support (Collie, 2021; Acton & Glasgow, 2020). In the Philippine context, teacher well-being has also been recognized as a priority concern, as educators often juggle multiple responsibilities beyond instruction, including documentation, intervention planning, and coordination with stakeholders (Department of Education [DepEd], 2022). While teachers are deeply committed to supporting their learners, it is equally important to recognize that safeguarding their mental health is both a professional necessity and a human responsibility.

Special education teachers, in particular, face unique and intensified challenges compared to their general education counterparts. They are frequently required to manage learners with diverse cognitive, emotional, and behavioral needs, which may include unpredictable classroom behaviors, individualized instruction demands, and continuous assessment requirements. These responsibilities, when combined with administrative workload and limited resources, can significantly affect their psychological well-being. International research affirms that classroom climate and student behavior are among the strongest contributors to teacher stress, especially in inclusive and SPED settings (McLean & Connor, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). Similarly, local studies in the Philippines reveal that SNED teachers often experience moderate to high levels of stress due to workload, classroom management challenges, and lack of sufficient support systems (Bautista et al., 2021; Ocampo & Tan, 2023). Despite these challenges, many teachers continue to demonstrate resilience by employing coping strategies such as peer support, adaptive teaching approaches, and personal stress management techniques. However, without structured institutional support, these individual coping strategies may not be sufficient to sustain long-term well-being.

At the national level, concerns regarding teacher stress and mental health have been increasingly documented, particularly following the transition to more demanding educational reforms and post-pandemic recovery efforts. Reports indicate that teacher workload, behavioral management issues, and emotional fatigue remain persistent challenges across public schools in the Philippines (DepEd, 2023). In the local context, similar concerns have been observed within the SPED Centers of the Division of Mandaue City, where teachers encounter difficulties in managing diverse learner behaviors while maintaining a positive classroom climate. Informal observations and field experiences suggest that SNED teachers in the division often experience stress related to classroom disruptions, documentation requirements, and limited access to mental health support systems. These realities highlight the urgent need to systematically examine how classroom climate and student behavior influence the mental health of SNED teachers, as well as how they cope with these challenges in their daily practice.

In response to these identified concerns, this study aims to examine the causes and effects of stress among SNED teachers, with particular focus on classroom climate and student behavior as key influencing factors. Furthermore, it seeks to explore the coping strategies employed by teachers and to use the findings as a basis for developing a comprehensive intervention and support framework tailored to their needs. This proposed output is envisioned to provide structured programs, professional support mechanisms, and wellness initiatives that can help teachers manage stress more effectively and sustain their professional engagement.

The significance of this study extends to multiple stakeholders within the educational community. For teachers, the study provides a deeper understanding of their mental health experiences and offers practical support mechanisms to enhance their well-being and professional performance. For learners, improved teacher well-being contributes to a more positive classroom climate, which supports better engagement, behavior, and academic outcomes. For the community and parents, the study promotes awareness of the challenges faced by SPED teachers and encourages collaborative support for inclusive education. Finally, for the entire Division of Mandaue City, the findings may serve as a basis for policy enhancement, program development, and the institutionalization of sustainable mental health support systems for educators. Ultimately, this study underscores the importance of caring for teachers as a fundamental step toward ensuring quality and inclusive education for all.

**Literature Review**

Special education teachers operate in highly demanding environments that require not only instructional expertise but also emotional resilience and adaptability. Similar to general education teachers, they face persistent challenges such as absenteeism, limited parental involvement, student poverty, and inadequate resources. However, the scope of their responsibilities is significantly broader. They are expected to manage individualized education programs (IEPs), complete extensive documentation, and handle large caseloads, often with minimal institutional support. In addition, SNED teachers must continuously modify instruction, implement behavioral interventions, and collaborate with multidisciplinary teams such as speech and occupational therapists (American University, 2025). These layered responsibilities can become overwhelming over time, contributing to increased stress levels and emotional

exhaustion. Recent studies emphasize that the intensity and complexity of SNED teaching roles place teachers at a higher risk of burnout compared to their peers in general education (Collie, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). This highlights the need for stronger support systems and better working conditions to sustain teacher well-being.

Teacher stress has been widely recognized as a critical factor affecting both instructional quality and classroom climate. When teachers experience prolonged stress, their ability to maintain a positive, responsive, and flexible learning environment may be compromised. As pointed out by Sönmez and Kolaşınlı (2020), classrooms led by highly stressed teachers tend to become more rigid and less interactive, limiting opportunities for meaningful engagement. This often results in reduced student participation, less collaborative learning, and a more teacher-centered approach to instruction. In such environments, communication may become one-sided, making it difficult for students to feel heard and valued. Supporting this, recent research suggests that teacher well-being is directly linked to classroom climate, where emotionally healthy teachers are more likely to foster inclusive, supportive, and engaging learning environments (McLean & Connor, 2021). This connection underscores the importance of addressing teacher stress not only for the benefit of educators but also for improving student experiences in the classroom.

Student behavior is another important factor that contributes to teacher stress, particularly in special education settings where behavioral challenges may be more frequent and complex. According to Blazar and Kraft (2017), students' attitudes and behaviors are strongly influenced by the type of support and interaction they receive from teachers. When teachers provide emotional support, demonstrate understanding, and create a positive classroom atmosphere, students tend to show higher engagement, improved behavior, and greater academic confidence. More recent studies affirm that positive teacher-student relationships can significantly reduce behavioral issues and enhance overall classroom functioning (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2020). However, when teachers are already experiencing stress, managing challenging behaviors becomes more difficult, potentially creating a cycle where stress and behavior problems reinforce each other. This highlights the importance of equipping teachers with effective strategies to manage both their own stress and student behavior simultaneously.

Coping strategies play a crucial role in helping teachers manage stress and maintain their effectiveness in the classroom. The study by Ghanizadeh and Jahedizadeh (2015) suggests that structured support programs are essential in addressing teacher burnout. These programs can be categorized into two main types: direct action programs, which aim to address the root causes of stress such as workload and lack of resources, and palliative programs, which focus on helping teachers cope through stress management techniques, relaxation strategies, and emotional support. More recent literature further emphasizes that adaptive coping strategies—such as seeking peer support, engaging in professional development, and practicing self-care—can significantly reduce stress and improve overall well-being (Bogaert et al., 2021; Collie, 2021). However, it is important to note that individual coping efforts alone may not be sufficient if systemic issues within the school environment are not addressed. This suggests that both personal and institutional approaches are necessary to effectively support teachers.

In the Philippine context, teacher stress has become an increasing concern, particularly in public schools where resources are often limited and class sizes remain large. Reports from the Department of Education (DepEd, 2023) highlight that teachers frequently experience workload pressure, administrative demands, and challenges in classroom management. In local settings such as the Division of Mandaue City, SNED teachers face similar realities, including managing diverse learner needs, addressing behavioral concerns, and fulfilling documentation requirements. These challenges are further intensified by limited access to mental health support and professional resources. Observations within SNED centers in the division suggest that while teachers demonstrate strong commitment and dedication, they often rely on personal coping strategies rather than structured support systems. This gap indicates the need for a more organized and responsive approach to supporting teacher mental health at the local level.

Overall, the reviewed literature highlights the interconnected roles of classroom climate, student behavior, stress, and coping strategies in shaping the mental health of special education teachers. While previous studies have

examined these variables individually, there remains a need to explore how they interact within a specific local context. This study aims to address this gap by examining the relationships among these variables within the Division of Mandaue City. The findings are expected to provide a deeper understanding of the factors affecting SNED teachers' mental health and to serve as a basis for developing a practical and context-responsive intervention and support system.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on two well-established and continuously applied theories that explain teacher stress and coping in educational settings, namely the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory and the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping. In addition, the study is supported by the legal foundations of Special Education, which emphasize the rights of learners with disabilities and the responsibilities of teachers in providing inclusive and quality education. The first is the Job Demands–Resources Theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; updated applications, 2022). This theory explains that stress arises when job demands outweigh the resources available to an individual. In the context of this study, classroom climate and student behavior are considered key job demands experienced by Special Needs Education (SNED) teachers. Managing diverse learners, addressing behavioral challenges, and maintaining a positive learning environment require significant emotional, mental, and professional effort. When these demands become overwhelming and are not matched with sufficient institutional support, teaching resources, administrative assistance, or emotional support, teachers are more likely to experience increased levels of stress. On the other hand, coping strategies serve as personal resources that help teachers manage these demands and maintain their well-being.

The second theory is the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; contemporary applications, 2020–2023). This theory emphasizes that stress is not solely determined by external conditions but also by how individuals perceive and respond to those conditions. In this study, SPED teachers assess classroom situations—such as disruptive student behavior or an unfavorable classroom climate—and interpret whether these situations are stressful. Their chosen coping strategies, whether problem-focused (e.g., modifying teaching approaches and classroom management techniques) or emotion-focused (e.g., seeking social support, practicing self-regulation, or engaging in stress-relieving activities), influence how stress affects them. This explains why teachers exposed to similar classroom conditions may experience different levels of stress and different outcomes.
The study is also grounded in the legal basis of Special Education in the Philippines. The implementation of Special Education is supported by Republic Act No. 11650, also known as the Inclusive Education Act for Learners with Disabilities, which ensures that learners with disabilities are provided with accessible and quality education. This law emphasizes the responsibility of schools and teachers to create inclusive learning environments that address the diverse needs of learners. Likewise, Republic Act No. 7277 promotes the rights and welfare of persons with disabilities, including their right to education and appropriate support services. These legal mandates increase the responsibilities of SNED teachers, as they are expected to provide individualized instruction, behavioral interventions, and inclusive classroom management practices. Consequently, these expectations may contribute to teachers' stress when resources and support systems are limited.

Guided by these theories and legal foundations, the study assumes that classroom climate and student behavior directly influence the level of stress experienced by SPED teachers. This level of stress, in turn, leads to certain effects of stress, which may include emotional exhaustion, reduced motivation, burnout, and decreased job satisfaction. However, the presence of effective coping strategies can reduce the level of stress or buffer its negative effects. Thus, coping strategies play a crucial role as a mediating factor in the relationship between stress and its outcomes. In relation to the conceptual framework, classroom climate and student behavior are treated as primary contributing factors that may increase or decrease the level of stress among teachers. The level of stress is then expected to influence its corresponding effects, while coping strategies serve as an important mechanism that can alter or manage these outcomes. This implies that the interaction among these variables is interconnected and reflects the actual experiences of SNED teachers in their classroom setting, particularly within the context of inclusive education mandated by Philippine laws and educational policies.

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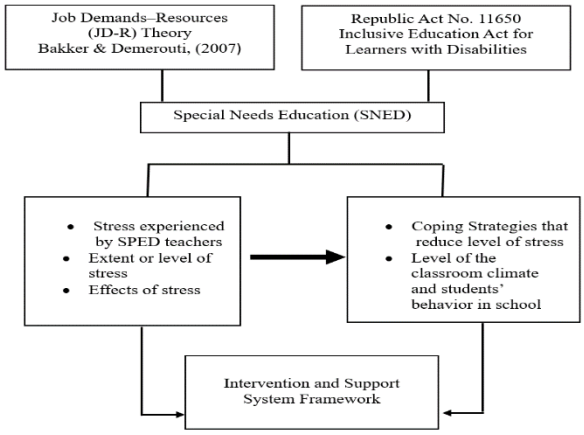
**Conceptual Framework**

*Figure 1. Theoretical-conceptual framework of the study*




Anchored on this assumption, the study further posits that there are significant relationships among classroom climate, student behavior, stress level, coping strategies, and the effects of stress. These relationships provide the basis for testing the hypotheses and for identifying which factors most strongly influence teacher mental health. Ultimately, the results of these relationships will guide the development of a responsive and evidence-based intervention and support system tailored to the needs of SNED teachers.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Design**

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design, which is appropriate for determining the relationship between two or more variables. This type of design allows the researcher to describe existing conditions and examine how variables are connected without manipulating them. In this study, it was used to determine the levels of classroom climate, student behavior, stress experienced by special SPED teachers, and their coping strategies. It also looked into the relationships between classroom climate and stress level, student behavior and stress level, level of stress and coping strategies, as well as the effects of stress and coping strategies. Through this approach, the study provides a clearer understanding of how these variables exist and relate to one another in the actual classroom setting.

This design was chosen because the study focuses on the real-life experiences of SPED teachers in their day-to-day teaching environment. The researcher gathered data based on how teachers perceive their classroom climate, manage student behavior, and experience stress, along with the coping strategies they use. Since no variables were controlled or manipulated, the design allowed the researcher to capture what is naturally happening in the schools. This makes the findings more realistic and grounded, which is important in identifying meaningful patterns among the variables. In turn, these results can serve as a practical basis for developing an intervention and support system that directly responds to the needs of SNED teachers in the Division of Mandaue City.

**Environment**

This study was conducted in the Division of Mandaue City, focusing on public schools that provide Special Needs Education (SNED) services, namely Mandaue City Central SPED School, Basak Elementary School, Canduman Elementary School, Subangdaku Elementary School, and Opao Elementary School. These schools serve as key learning environments for children with diverse needs, where SPED teachers work closely with learners who require individualized instruction, behavioral support, and adaptive teaching approaches. The Mandaue City Central SPED School functions as the main hub for specialized services in the division, while the other schools support inclusive

education through SPED programs integrated within their regular school setting. Across these schools, teachers handle a wide range of learner needs, which often require patience, flexibility, and continuous adjustment in teaching strategies. At the same time, the schools maintain a strong sense of collaboration among teachers, school heads, and parents to support the development of learners with exceptionalities. Given these conditions, the selected schools provide a relevant and realistic setting for examining how classroom climate and student behavior influence the mental health of SPED teachers, making the findings more applicable in developing a practical intervention and support system within the division.

**Participants and Sample Size**

The participants of this study consist of all 30 special education (SPED) teachers assigned in the SPED Centers within the Division of Mandaue City, using a complete enumeration approach to ensure a comprehensive representation of their experiences. All respondents have at least three years of teaching experience in special education, allowing them to provide informed insights on classroom climate, student behavior, stress levels, and coping strategies. These teachers come from various SPED Centers across the division, including the Mandaue City SPED Center, and handle learners with diverse needs across different grade levels. By focusing on the entire population of SPED teachers in the division, the study ensures that the findings are grounded in the local context and can serve as a basis for developing a responsive and practical intervention and support system tailored to their needs. All participating teachers have demonstrated competence through their performance ratings and professional experience. They also voluntarily agreed to be part of the study and signed the informed consent form provided by the researcher. Their involvement not only enriches the data but also affirms their commitment to improving the quality of special education services in their respective communities.

**Instruments**

The data gathered in this study were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools based on the nature of each variable and research question. All questionnaires utilized in this study were standardized and validated instruments, ensuring the reliability and accuracy of the data collected.

For Part I (Demographic Profile of SPED Teachers), the data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages to describe the profile of the respondents. For Part II (Level of Stress among SPED Teachers), responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (5 – Strongly Agree to 1 – Strongly Disagree). The weighted mean was used to determine the overall level of stress experienced by the teachers, allowing the researcher to identify the extent to which different stress indicators were experienced. For Part III (Effects of Stress / Emotional State Questionnaire), a 5-point scale (1 – Not at all to 5 – All the time) was utilized. The weighted mean was computed to determine the frequency and intensity of the emotional and psychological effects of stress among SPED teachers. For Part IV (Coping Strategies in Managing Teaching-Related Stress), responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (5 – Strongly Agree to 1 – Strongly Disagree). The weighted mean was used to identify the most used and effective coping strategies among the respondents. For Part V (Student Behavior Questionnaire), responses were based on a 3-point scale (1 – Not True, 2 – Somewhat True, 3 – Certainly True). The weighted mean was used to determine the level of student behavioral characteristics as observed by the teachers across the five domains: emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems, and prosocial behavior. This instrument was adapted from the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) developed by Goodman (2005), a validated tool widely used in assessing children's behavioral and emotional functioning. For Part VI (Classroom Evaluation Questionnaire), responses were measured using a 4-point scale (SA – Strongly Agree, A – Agree, D – Disagree, SD – Strongly Disagree). These responses were assigned numerical values and analyzed using the weighted mean to determine the level of classroom climate in terms of teacher practices, communication, and learning environment.

To ensure the reliability of the adapted instruments, Cronbach's Alpha was utilized. This statistical measure helps determine the internal consistency of the questionnaire, or how well the items relate to one another in measuring the same concept (Frost, 2022).

**Data Gathering Procedure**

The data gathering process was carried out in three phases: pre-data collection, actual data collection, and post-data processing.

Pre-data gathering. Prior to data gathering, the researcher secured approval from the University of the Visayas Graduate School and the Schools Division Superintendent of Mandaue City. Clearance from the Research Ethics Committee (REC) was also obtained to ensure that all procedures followed ethical standards. After securing all necessary permissions, the researcher coordinated with the school heads of the selected schools within the Division of Mandaue City, namely Mandaue City Central SPED School, Basak Elementary School, Canduman Elementary School, Subangdaku Elementary School, and Opao Elementary School. An orientation was then conducted among the SPED teacher-participants to explain the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and the confidentiality of their responses. Informed consent forms were distributed and collected prior to the administration of the instruments.

Actual data gathering. The data were gathered from all thirty (30) SPED teachers in the Division of Mandaue City using a complete enumeration approach. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires through an online platform, specifically Google Forms, to ensure ease of access and convenience for the participants. Prior to distribution, coordination with each school head was done to facilitate smooth communication with the respondents without disrupting their teaching responsibilities. The questionnaire link was sent through email or secured messaging platforms, along with clear instructions on how to accomplish the survey. Each participant was given sufficient time, approximately 20 to 30 minutes, to complete the questionnaire at their most convenient time. The researcher remained available through online communication to answer questions or clarify instructions while ensuring that participants answered independently. It is important to note that the data gathered were solely based on the teachers' professional experiences and perceptions regarding classroom climate, student behavior, stress, and coping strategies. No students were directly involved in the data collection process.

Post-data gathering. After all responses were collected, the researcher retrieved the data from the online platform and proceeded with data checking, encoding, and organization. The responses were then prepared for statistical analysis to determine the relationships among the variables in the study. All data collected were treated with strict confidentiality and were used solely for research purposes. Upon completion of the study, all data were securely stored and properly disposed of in accordance with ethical standards to protect the privacy of the participants.

**Data Analysis**

To ensure the rigor of the study, the researcher utilized validated and well-established instruments aligned with the variables being examined, including stress, coping strategies, classroom climate, and student behavior. The adapted questionnaires were carefully selected to maintain relevance to the context of special education teachers, while reliability was checked through appropriate measures such as Cronbach's Alpha. Descriptive statistics, including measures of central tendency and weighted mean, were used to accurately summarize the data, while the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was applied to determine the relationships among variables. The use of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), a standardized behavioral tool, further strengthened the reliability of the data. All computations were processed using SPSS to ensure accuracy and consistency, thereby enhancing the overall validity and credibility of the study findings.

**Ethical Considerations**

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013). Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Visayas, with Reference No. 2026-0248, dated May 15, 2026. Since the participants of the study were SPED teachers, informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their participation. They were fully informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and their rights as research participants. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants were given the freedom to withdraw at any time without any consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained by ensuring that the identities of the participants were not disclosed. All data gathered were securely stored and used solely for research purposes. Transparency in the research process was upheld, and all research activities complied with the ethical standards and institutional guidelines of the University of the Visayas.

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**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents, interprets, and analyzes the data gathered to examine the relationship among classroom climate, student behavior, stress levels, effects of stress, and coping strategies of Special Education (SPED) teachers in the Division of Mandaue City for School Year 2025–2026. The findings are organized according to the specific research questions and are discussed in relation to teacher mental health, classroom management, and special education practices. Through this analysis, the chapter aims to provide a deeper understanding of how classroom climate and student behavior influence the mental health and well-being of SPED teachers, as well as how coping strategies help them manage stress in their professional practice. The results further serve as the basis for the development of a responsive Intervention and Support System Framework intended to promote better mental health and professional well-being among SPED teachers.

**Profile of the Participants**

The demographic profile of the Special Education (SPED) teacher-participants included their age, sex, years of teaching experience in special education, and highest educational attainment. This information provided important background in understanding the experiences of the respondents in relation to classroom climate, student behavior, stress levels, effects of stress, and coping strategies. Since teacher experiences and professional backgrounds may influence how stress is perceived and managed, the profile data served as a basis for interpreting the findings of the study more accurately.

**Teachers Basic Information**

Understanding the demographic profile of the Special Education (SPED) teachers provides important context in interpreting their experiences related to stress, classroom climate, student behavior, and coping strategies. Variables such as age, sex, teaching experience, and educational attainment may influence how teachers manage classroom demands, respond to challenges, and sustain their professional responsibilities. Examining these characteristics also helps describe the background of the respondents and provides a clearer picture of the teaching workforce involved in the study.

The demographic profile of the respondents reflects a predominantly female and professionally active teaching workforce. In terms of age, the largest group of teachers belonged to the 30–39 age bracket (48.6%), followed by those aged 40–49 years old (32.4%). Only a small percentage were 50 years old and above (2.7%). These findings suggest that most of the respondents are in their productive and active years in the teaching profession. Teachers within these age groups are often expected to balance instructional responsibilities, classroom management, paperwork, and professional development, particularly in SNED settings where the demands of teaching learners with diverse needs can be more challenging.

**Table 1**

*Special Education Teachers' Basic Information*

| Variable | Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 20–29 years old | 6 | 16.2 |
| | 30–39 years old | 18 | 48.6 |
| | 40–49 years old | 12 | 32.4 |
| | 50 years old and above | 1 | 2.7 |
| Sex | Male | 1 | 2.7 |
| | Female | 36 | 97.3 |
| Teaching Experience | 0–5 years | 15 | 40.5 |
| | 6-10 years | 7 | 18.9 |
| | 11–15 years | 8 | 21.6 |
| | 16 years and above | 7 | 18.9 |
| Highest Educational Attainment | Bachelor's Degree | 6 | 16.2 |
| | Master's Units | 18 | 48.6 |
| | Master's Degree | 10 | 27.0 |

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Doctorate Units | 1 | 2.7 |
| Doctorate Degree | 2 | 5.4 |

In terms of sex, the respondents were overwhelmingly female (97.3%), while only 2.7% were male. This reflects the common trend in the teaching profession, particularly in elementary and special needs education, where female teachers continue to dominate the workforce. The findings may also suggest that women are more represented in caregiving and learner-centered professions such as SNED, where patience, empathy, nurturing, and emotional support are often essential qualities in handling learners with special educational needs.

Regarding teaching experience, the highest proportion of respondents had 0–5 years of experience (40.5%), indicating that many teachers are still relatively early in their professional careers. The remaining respondents were distributed across 6–10 years (18.9%), 11–15 years (21.6%), and 16 years and above (18.9%). This distribution reflects a combination of novice and experienced teachers within the workforce. The presence of many early-career teachers may imply that some are still adjusting to the complex responsibilities of SNED instruction, including individualized teaching, behavior management, IEP preparation, and collaboration with parents and specialists. At the same time, the presence of experienced teachers may contribute positively through mentoring, peer support, and shared professional practices.

In terms of educational attainment, nearly half of the respondents had earned Master's units (48.6%), followed by those who had completed a Master's degree (27.0%). Only a small percentage had reached the doctoral level (8.1% combined), while Bachelor's degree holders comprised 16.2% of the respondents. These findings suggest that many teachers are actively pursuing graduate education and professional advancement. This may reflect their commitment to improving instructional competence, classroom management skills, and professional qualifications, especially in the field of SNED where specialized knowledge and continuous learning are highly important.

Overall, the findings suggest that the teaching workforce is largely composed of female, early- to mid-career educators who are actively investing in their professional growth and development. While many teachers are still building their experience and expertise in SNED instruction, their strong participation in graduate studies reflects a positive commitment to lifelong learning and professional improvement. The findings also imply the importance of continued institutional support through mentoring programs, professional development opportunities, wellness support, and specialized training to help teachers strengthen their skills, confidence, and resilience in handling the demands of SNED classrooms.

**Teachers' Level of Academic Stress**

Stress has become one of the major concerns affecting teachers' mental health and overall well-being, particularly among Special Education (SPED) teachers who work with learners with diverse educational and behavioral needs. The nature of SPED instruction often requires additional emotional, instructional, and professional demands, which may contribute to stress in the workplace. Understanding the level of stress experienced by teachers is important in identifying the common challenges they encounter and in determining the kinds of support needed to help them manage these pressures effectively.

**Table 2**

*Teachers' Level of Stress*

| Indicators | Mean | SD | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| I feel stressed when encountering issues with my students' families. | 3.14 | 0.918 | Somewhat Agree |
| I feel stressed due to a lack of support from the administrators at my school. | 2.78 | 0.947 | Somewhat Agree |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| I feel stressed due to a lack of support from colleagues at my school. | 2.81 | 1.023 | Somewhat Agree |
| I feel stressed due to a lack of support from my family and friends. | 2.76 | 1.116 | Somewhat Agree |
| I feel stressed when managing student behaviors. | 3.05 | 0.815 | Somewhat Agree |
| I feel stressed because I have too much teaching work to do. | 3.19 | 0.877 | Somewhat Agree |
| I feel stressed due to a lack of time to prepare and teach the curricular content. | 3.16 | 1.014 | Somewhat Agree |
| I feel stressed when I cannot meet the diverse learning needs of my students. | 3.32 | 0.944 | Somewhat Agree |
| I feel stressed when I think I am not doing a good job with my teaching. | 3.19 | 0.967 | Somewhat Agree |
| **Average** | **3.05** | **0.779** | **Moderate** |

*Legend: 1.00-1.80=Strongly Disagree, 1.81-2.60=Disagree, 2.61-3.40=Neutral, 3.41-4.20= Agree, 4.21-5.00=Strongly Agree*

The data reveal that teachers experienced a moderate level of stress (M = 3.05, SD = 0.779), indicating that stressors were present in their professional responsibilities but were not experienced at an extremely high level. Although the overall description was interpreted as “moderate,” the findings still reflected the realities encountered by SNED teachers who handled learners with diverse disabilities and educational needs. In SNED classrooms, teachers commonly managed learners with autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability, hearing impairment, visual impairment, learning disabilities, ADHD, speech and language difficulties, and behavioral or emotional disorders. These varied learner profiles required individualized instruction, constant monitoring, classroom behavior management, and differentiated teaching strategies, which contributed to teachers’ stress.

Among the indicators, the highest mean was recorded in the item “I feel stressed when I cannot meet the diverse learning needs of my students” (M = 3.32). This finding suggests that SNED teachers experience pressure in addressing the academic, behavioral, emotional, and communication needs of learners within one classroom. In many cases, teachers simultaneously handle learners with different disability categories and functioning levels, requiring multiple instructional adjustments, accommodations, and individualized interventions. The “moderate” finding implies that while teachers are generally capable of managing these responsibilities, they still encounter recurring difficulties in ensuring that all learners receive appropriate support and attention.

The findings also reflect the realities of paperwork and professional responsibilities in SNED instruction. Teachers are expected to prepare Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), monitor learner progress, document interventions, and develop Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs) for learners with behavioral concerns. These responsibilities require continuous assessment, observation, documentation, and coordination with parents and specialists. Transition planning for learners moving to higher grade levels, inclusive settings, or vocational preparation also adds to teachers’ responsibilities. In addition, parent conferences and multidisciplinary collaboration with therapists, guidance counselors, psychologists, and school administrators require additional time, preparation, and emotional effort. Although these responsibilities are part of SNED teaching, the cumulative demands of paperwork, meetings, planning, and instructional preparation contribute to teachers’ moderate stress levels. According to Brunsting et al. (2022), excessive paperwork, individualized planning, and behavior management demands are among the major causes of stress among special education teachers.

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The stress related to workload (M = 3.19) and lack of time to prepare curricular content (M = 3.16) further highlights the daily realities experienced by SNED teachers. Aside from classroom instruction, teachers prepare modified learning materials, intervention activities, anecdotal records, progress reports, and compliance documents required by the school and the Department of Education. These responsibilities often extend beyond working hours, resulting in physical and emotional exhaustion. The findings imply that prolonged exposure to these demands may eventually affect teachers' mental health, teaching effectiveness, and job satisfaction if adequate support is not provided. This supports the findings of Pressley (2021), who emphasized that heavy workload and instructional pressures contribute significantly to teacher stress and burnout.

The indicators related to lack of support from administrators (M = 2.78), colleagues (M = 2.81), and family and friends (M = 2.76) were interpreted within the "somewhat agree" range, reflecting "seldom to moderate" experiences of stress. This suggests that teachers occasionally experience feelings of emotional or professional isolation, although support systems are still somewhat present. In SNED settings, teachers may sometimes feel misunderstood because of the specialized nature of their work and the complexity of handling learners with disabilities. However, the lower means also imply that support from colleagues, administrators, and family members still helps teachers cope with work-related stress and prevents stress from becoming severe.

The overall "moderate" stress finding further implies that teachers are still able to manage their professional responsibilities despite recurring challenges. However, moderate stress should not be ignored because continuous exposure to stress may gradually affect teachers' emotional well-being, resilience, and classroom effectiveness over time. The findings highlight the importance of strengthening support systems such as mentoring programs, wellness activities, emotional support groups, protected planning time, administrative assistance, and professional development programs focused on inclusive education, behavior management, IEP preparation, and classroom intervention strategies. According to Collie (2021), supportive school environments and strong professional support systems play an important role in reducing teacher stress and promoting emotional well-being.

**Effects of Teachers' Academic Stress**

Stress among SPED teachers is an important factor that influences their mental health, teaching performance, and overall well-being. Due to the demanding nature of special education, teachers are often exposed to various stressors related to instructional responsibilities, classroom management, learner diversity, workload, and support systems. Understanding the level of stress experienced by teachers is essential in identifying the specific areas that contribute to their mental and emotional strain. This also provides a clearer basis for developing appropriate intervention and support mechanisms that can help teachers effectively manage stress within their professional environment.

**Table 3**

*Effects of Teachers' Level of Stress*

| Effects of Stress | Mean | SD | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| Depression | 2.08 | 0.831 | Seldom |
| Agoraphobia–Panic | 1.66 | 0.937 | Seldom |
| Anxiety | 1.96 | 0.909 | Seldom |
| Fatigue | 1.83 | .883 | Seldom |
| Insomnia | 2.17 | 0.994 | Seldom |
| Illness, sleeplessness, etc. | 1.97 | 0.941 | Seldom |
| Average | 1.95 | 0.916 | Seldom |

*Legend: 1.00–1.80= Not at all; 1.81-2.60 – Seldom; 2.61-3.40= Sometimes; 3.41-4.20= Often; 4.21-5.00= All the time*

The findings show that the effects of teachers' stress are generally low, with an overall mean of 1.95 (SD = 0.916), interpreted as "seldom." This suggests that although teachers experience moderate stress in their work, its physical, emotional, and psychological effects are not frequently experienced. The "seldom"

interpretation means that stress-related symptoms happen occasionally but are not severe enough to greatly affect teachers' daily performance, relationships, or classroom responsibilities. This may indicate that teachers still have effective coping strategies, emotional resilience, and support systems that help them manage the demands of SNED teaching.

Among the indicators, insomnia obtained the highest mean (M = 2.17), followed by depression (M = 2.08), although both still fell within the "seldom" category. These findings suggest that sleep difficulties and emotional exhaustion are among the earliest signs of stress experienced by teachers. In SNED classrooms, teachers often deal with heavy paperwork, lesson modifications, IEP preparation, behavior intervention planning, parent conferences, and classroom management concerns involving learners with autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, intellectual disabilities, and behavioral disorders. These responsibilities may contribute to mental fatigue and emotional strain, which can affect teachers' sleeping patterns and emotional well-being. Although these symptoms are not frequently experienced, they may already indicate early signs of stress that require attention and support.

The "seldom" findings also imply that many teachers are still able to function effectively despite the demanding nature of their work. Teachers may have developed positive coping strategies such as peer collaboration, spiritual support, emotional regulation, and time management practices that help them manage stress more effectively. Their professionalism, commitment to learners, and adaptability may also explain why severe stress-related effects remain minimal. According to Kim and Burić (2020), teachers may initially experience only mild stress symptoms because they are able to adapt to workplace demands, although prolonged stress may eventually affect emotional well-being and job performance over time.

Meanwhile, agoraphobia-panic obtained the lowest mean (M = 1.66), interpreted as "not at all." This finding suggests that severe anxiety-related symptoms such as panic attacks, social withdrawal, or emotional breakdown are generally absent among the respondents. It may indicate that teachers are still emotionally stable and capable of managing professional responsibilities despite workplace pressures. However, occasional feelings of fatigue, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion should not be ignored because these may gradually worsen when stress continues for a long period without adequate support.

The findings further imply that although stress effects are currently low, preventive support systems are still important to protect teachers' mental health and well-being. Schools may strengthen wellness programs, stress management activities, peer support groups, counseling services, mentoring systems, and workload management strategies to help teachers maintain healthy coping practices. SNED teachers, in particular, may benefit from additional support because of the complexity of handling learners with diverse educational and behavioral needs.

Moreover, moderate stress may not immediately result in severe health concerns, but continuous exposure to paperwork, behavior management, IEP preparation, multidisciplinary collaboration, and instructional demands may gradually affect teachers' emotional and physical health over time. According to Herman et al. (2020), teacher stress often begins with mild symptoms such as fatigue, irritability, and sleep disturbances before developing into more serious emotional concerns when left unmanaged. Similarly, Collie (2021) emphasized that prolonged occupational stress may negatively affect teachers' motivation, emotional well-being, and instructional effectiveness.

Overall, the findings suggest that while SNED teachers only "seldom" experience the effects of stress, the presence of early emotional and physical symptoms should still be considered important. Early intervention, supportive leadership, manageable workloads, and accessible mental health support systems are necessary to ensure that stress remains manageable and does not progress into more serious conditions that may affect teachers' well-being and classroom effectiveness.

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**Teachers' Coping Strategies in Managing Teaching-Related Stress Instruction**

Coping strategies play a vital role in helping Special Needs Education (SNED) teachers manage the emotional, mental, and professional demands associated with teaching learners with diverse needs. These coping mechanisms help teachers maintain emotional balance, reduce stress, and continue performing their responsibilities effectively despite the challenges of the profession. Given the complex classroom situations and instructional challenges encountered by SNED teachers, the ability to adapt, remain resilient, and maintain a positive outlook is essential for sustaining their well-being and effectiveness in teaching. Teachers often encounter demanding responsibilities such as behavior management, individualized instruction, paperwork preparation, and collaboration with parents and specialists, making effective coping strategies even more important. Identifying the coping strategies commonly used by teachers provides a clearer understanding of how they respond to stressful situations and maintain professional commitment despite various pressures in the workplace.

The findings show that teachers demonstrate a highly effective level of stress coping mechanisms (M = 4.12, SD = 0.796), indicating that they generally possess strong adaptive capacities in managing teaching-related stress. The results suggest that despite experiencing moderate stress levels in their professional responsibilities, teachers are able to respond positively through resilience, innovation, professional commitment, and adaptive coping behaviors. The overall "highly effective" interpretation implies that teachers actively utilize constructive strategies to manage emotional, instructional, and workplace pressures commonly encountered in SNED settings.

**Table 4**

*Stress Coping Strategies of Teachers*

| Indicators | Mean | SD | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| I can successfully adapt to the stress of my teaching situation. | 3.86 | 0.713 | Agree |
| I am able to adapt to any instructional modality successfully. | 3.95 | 0.621 | Agree |
| I can be flexible with my teaching methods and strategies to adjust to stressful situations. | 4.05 | 0.621 | Agree |
| I am creative with my teaching methods using the available resources. | 4.05 | 0.664 | Agree |
| I integrate technology into my lessons in innovative ways. | 4.22 | 0.787 | Strongly Agree |
| I seek resources and professional development opportunities to cope with teaching stress. | 4.16 | 0.727 | Agree |
| I look for new pedagogical knowledge and skills to handle stressful teaching situations. | 4.00 | 0.745 | Agree |
| I avoid dwelling on stressors that are beyond my control. | 3.89 | 0.737 | Agree |
| I can manage teaching stress when it is within my control. | 3.97 | 0.726 | Agree |
| I believe I can manage teaching-related stress in the future. | 4.11 | 0.699 | Agree |
| I view teaching challenges as opportunities for professional growth. | 4.16 | 0.800 | Agree |
| I gain new knowledge, skills, or confidence after overcoming stressful teaching experiences. | 4.16 | 0.800 | Agree |
| I become a stronger person each time I overcome teaching stress. | 4.14 | 0.822 | Agree |
| I apply lessons learned from past stress to new teaching situations. | 4.22 | 0.672 | Strongly Agree |
| Overcoming stress increases my confidence in stressful situations. | 4.05 | 0.815 | Agree |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Support from others during stressful times increases my confidence to rely on them. | 4.11 | 0.774 | Agree |
| I remain hopeful that stressful situations will improve with perseverance. | 4.16 | 0.602 | Agree |
| I do not give up teaching even when it becomes stressful. | 4.22 | 0.787 | Strongly Agree |
| I feel happy with my job even during stressful times. | 3.97 | 0.986 | Agree |
| I am optimistic about continuing my teaching career. | 4.16 | 0.834 | Agree |
| **Average** | **4.12** | **0.796** | **Effective** |

*Legend: 1.00-1.80=Strongly Disagree, 1.81-2.60=Disagree, 2.61-3.40=Neutral, 3.41-4.20= Agree, 4.21-5.00=Strongly Agree*

Among the indicators, the highest-rated coping strategies were integrating technology in innovative ways, applying lessons learned from past stress, and maintaining commitment to teaching despite stress (all M = 4.22), interpreted as "strongly agree." These findings indicate that teachers heavily rely on innovation, professional experience, and personal dedication as important coping resources. In SNED classrooms, teachers often encounter diverse learner needs, behavioral challenges, IEP preparation, parent conferences, transition planning, and extensive documentation requirements. The strong agreement on integrating technology suggests that teachers use digital resources, interactive applications, assistive technologies, and online instructional materials to reduce workload difficulties and improve learner engagement.

The findings imply that technology integration not only enhances instructional delivery but also serves as a practical coping mechanism that helps teachers manage classroom complexity more efficiently. The high rating on applying lessons learned from past stress experiences further suggests that teachers have developed emotional maturity and adaptive resilience over time. This finding implies that prior experiences with stress may contribute positively to teachers' professional growth, confidence, and adaptability. According to MacIntyre et al. (2020), teachers who engage in adaptive coping strategies such as problem-solving, reflection, and positive reframing tend to demonstrate higher resilience, emotional stability, and job satisfaction.

Similarly, the strong agreement on maintaining commitment to teaching despite stress reflects teachers' dedication, sense of purpose, and professional responsibility. SPED teachers often continue to demonstrate commitment to learners despite emotional exhaustion, workload pressures, and challenging classroom situations. This finding suggests that teachers possess intrinsic motivation and a strong sense of advocacy for learners with disabilities. Their commitment may also stem from emotional fulfillment gained through helping learners achieve progress despite challenges. The implication of this finding is that professional dedication serves as a protective factor against burnout and emotional withdrawal.

The indicators related to optimism, professional growth, and continuous learning also received high ratings, suggesting that teachers maintain positive perspectives and actively seek self-improvement despite occupational stress. Teachers who participate in seminars, professional development programs, mentoring sessions, and collaborative learning opportunities may become more confident and capable in addressing classroom demands. In SPED education, continuous learning is particularly important because teachers must remain knowledgeable about inclusive strategies, assistive technologies, behavior intervention techniques, and differentiated instruction practices. The findings imply that professional growth opportunities contribute significantly to teachers' coping capacities and emotional resilience. Aulén et al. (2021) emphasized that proactive coping mechanisms, professional learning, and flexibility are strongly associated with improved teacher well-being and reduced burnout.

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On the other hand, the lowest-rated indicator was the ability to adapt to stress in teaching situations (M = 3.86), although it still fell within the "agree" range. This finding suggests that while teachers generally adapt well to stressful situations, there are still moments when adjusting to sudden instructional, emotional, or behavioral challenges becomes difficult. In SPED classrooms, teachers may encounter unpredictable learner behaviors, emotional outbursts, parent concerns, or rapidly changing instructional demands that require immediate adjustments. The lower mean implies that adaptability remains a developing skill that may still require institutional support, mentoring, and stress management interventions. Although the indicator remained positive, the finding highlights the reality that continuous exposure to stress may occasionally challenge teachers' coping capacities.

The overall pattern of results suggests that teachers are not merely surviving stressful experiences but are coping through proactive, growth-oriented, and solution-focused behaviors. These highly effective coping strategies may explain why earlier findings revealed only minimal negative effects of stress despite moderate stress levels. Teachers' resilience, optimism, professional dedication, and commitment to continuous improvement appear to buffer the adverse emotional and psychological effects commonly associated with workplace stress.

The findings carry important implications for schools and educational leaders. Since teachers already demonstrate strong coping capacities, schools should continue strengthening programs that sustain resilience and well-being among teachers. Professional development initiatives focusing on technology integration, emotional resilience, mental health awareness, behavior management, and adaptive teaching strategies may further enhance teachers' coping abilities. Mentoring programs, peer support groups, and collaborative learning communities may also help teachers share effective stress management practices and reduce emotional isolation in the workplace.

Furthermore, schools should continue fostering supportive environments that reinforce optimism, encouragement, recognition, and work-life balance. Administrative support, manageable workloads, and accessible mental health programs may strengthen teachers' long-term emotional well-being and job satisfaction. According to Collie (2021), supportive school climates and positive professional relationships significantly contribute to teacher resilience and occupational well-being. Likewise, Pressley (2021) noted that teachers who receive emotional and institutional support are more likely to maintain motivation, adaptability, and long-term commitment to the teaching profession despite workplace stressors.

**Teachers' Perceived Behavior of Students**

Student behavior plays a significant role in shaping the classroom environment and influencing teachers' stress, instructional practices, and overall teaching experience. In Special Education (SPED) settings, teachers frequently encounter diverse behavioral manifestations that may either support or challenge the learning process. Understanding teachers' perceptions of students' behavior is important in identifying the common behavioral patterns observed in the classroom, as these behaviors may directly affect classroom climate, teacher well-being, and learner engagement. Examining these behaviors also provides insight into the types of support and interventions needed to promote positive classroom interactions and effective teaching-learning experiences**.**

**Table 5**

*Teachers' Perceived Behavior of Students*

| Perceived Students Behavior | Mean | SD | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| Emotional Symptoms | 1.82 | 0.749 | Evident |
| Conduct Problems | 2.06 | 0.739 | Evident |
| Hyperactivity / Inattention | 2.21 | 0.602 | Evident |
| Peer Relationship Problems | 2.10 | 0.571 | Evident |
| Prosocial Behavior (Positive Behavior) | 2.37 | 0/966 | High |
| Average | 2.31 | 0/725 | Evident |

*Legend: 1.00-1.66= Less Evident; 1.67-2.33=Evident; 2.54-3.00=Highly Evident*

The results indicate that teachers generally perceive students' behavior as evident (M = 2.31), suggesting that both positive and challenging behaviors are commonly observed in the classroom. The findings reflect the realities of SPED and SNED classrooms where learners demonstrate different social, emotional, and behavioral needs depending on their disabilities and developmental conditions.

Among the indicators, prosocial behavior obtained the highest mean (M = 2.37), interpreted as "high." This suggests that learners commonly demonstrate positive behaviors such as cooperation, sharing, helping others, and active participation in classroom activities. The finding may imply that teachers are effectively implementing supportive strategies such as Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), peer buddy systems, cooperative learning activities, praise, token reinforcement, and positive behavior support. Teachers also use modeling, group activities, and structured classroom routines to encourage empathy and positive social interaction among learners. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2021), strengthening prosocial behavior helps improve classroom climate and learner engagement. Similarly, Domitrovich et al. (2020) found that SEL interventions improve social behavior and reduce classroom behavioral difficulties. However, Gage et al. (2021) explained that some learners with developmental and behavioral conditions may still experience difficulty maintaining consistent positive social interaction despite interventions.

Hyperactivity and inattention were also perceived as evident among learners. This reflects the common classroom challenges experienced by teachers handling learners with ADHD, autism spectrum disorder, and learning disabilities. Learners may struggle with focus, impulsiveness, and following instructions during classroom activities. To manage these concerns, teachers often implement intervention supports such as visual schedules, sensory breaks, task chunking, movement activities, calming corners, positive reinforcement, and individualized Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs). These strategies help improve learner attention, participation, and self-regulation while reducing classroom disruptions. DuPaul et al. (2022) confirmed that structured classroom interventions and reinforcement strategies improve attention and reduce disruptive behaviors among learners with ADHD. In contrast, Reicher (2020) noted that behavioral interventions may become less effective when school resources and support systems are limited.

Peer relationship problems were likewise evident, suggesting that some learners experience difficulty interacting appropriately with classmates. Teachers commonly address these concerns through role-playing activities, peer-mediated interventions, buddy systems, guided social interaction, and cooperative learning activities to strengthen communication and socialization skills. These intervention supports help learners improve confidence and develop healthier peer relationships. According to Garwood et al. (2021), peer-mediated interventions improve classroom participation and social engagement among learners with disabilities.

Conduct problems were also observed as evident among learners. Some learners may display tantrums, aggression, noncompliance, or defiant behaviors due to emotional, communication, or sensory difficulties. Teachers manage these behaviors using Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), token systems, behavior contracts, de-escalation strategies, classroom routines, and collaboration with parents and specialists. These strategies help maintain classroom order and support positive learner behavior. Caldarella et al. (2021) found that positive behavior interventions improve classroom management and reduce disruptive behavior. However, Simonsen et al. (2020) argued that intervention effectiveness may decrease when teachers experience high stress and limited administrative support.

Meanwhile, emotional symptoms obtained the lowest mean (M = 1.82), although still interpreted as "evident." This suggests that emotional concerns such as anxiety, sadness, withdrawal, and emotional sensitivity are present but less visible compared to behavioral concerns. Teachers often provide emotional support through emotional check-ins, calming activities, mindfulness exercises, counseling referrals, and SEL-based interventions to help learners regulate emotions and feel emotionally secure in the classroom.

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Overall, the findings highlight that while positive behaviors are strongly present, behavioral and emotional concerns still require continuous intervention and support. The study further emphasizes the importance of inclusive teaching practices, classroom behavior management strategies, SEL programs, and collaboration among teachers, parents, therapists, and school specialists in supporting the behavioral and emotional development of learners in SPED and SNED classrooms.

**Teachers' Instructional Practices (Classroom Climate)**

Classroom climate plays an important role in influencing both teacher well-being and student learning experiences. Instructional practices that promote empathy, support, communication, and positive teacher-student relationships contribute significantly to creating an inclusive and responsive learning environment. Teachers' instructional practices reflect how they interact with learners, manage classroom situations, and facilitate meaningful engagement among students with diverse needs. Examining these practices provides a clearer understanding of the overall classroom climate and the extent to which teachers establish supportive and learner-centered environments.

**Table 6**

*Teachers' Instructional Practices (Classroom Climate)*

| Indicators | Mean | SD | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| The teacher considers students' feelings. | 3.59 | 0.987 | Agree |
| The teacher talks rather than listens. | 2.43 | 0.949 | Neutral |
| The teacher talks individually with students. | 3.41 | 0.682 | Agree |
| The teacher goes out of his/her way to help students. | 3.43 | 0.545 | Agree |
| The teacher helps each student who is having trouble with the work. | 3.54 | 0.687 | Agree |
| The teacher thinks up innovative activities for students to do. | 3.46 | 0.614 | Agree |
| The teacher often thinks of unusual class activities. | 2.89 | 0.645 | Neutral |
| The teacher is unfriendly and inconsiderate toward students. | 1.65 | 0.614 | Strongly Disagree |
| The teacher dominates class discussions. | 2.43 | 0.560 | Disagree |
| The teacher isn't interested in students' problems. | 1.65 | 0.835 | Strongly Disagree |
| **Average** | **3.52** | **0.747** | **Good** |

The results show that teachers demonstrate generally good instructional practices (M = 3.52, SD = 0.747), indicating a positive and supportive approach to teaching. The highest-rated practice is teachers' ability to consider students' feelings (M = 3.59), followed closely by helping students who experience difficulty and providing individual support, reflecting a strong emphasis on learner-centered and caring practices. In contrast, the lowest-rated indicators include negative behaviors such as being unfriendly or uninterested in students' problems (both M = 1.65), which were strongly disagreed with, suggesting that such undesirable practices are rarely exhibited. Notably, some areas fall in the neutral range, particularly teachers talking more than listening (M = 2.43) and limited use of unusual or highly creative activities (M = 2.89), indicating opportunities for improvement in promoting student voice and creativity. Overall, the findings suggest that while teachers are supportive and responsive, there is still room to enhance interactive and innovative instructional approaches.

These findings imply that teachers have established a positive classroom environment grounded in empathy, respect, and learner support, which are essential in promoting effective learning and emotional security among students. In SNED classrooms, supportive instructional practices are especially important because learners often require individualized guidance, patience, and emotional encouragement to actively participate in classroom

activities. The findings also suggest that teachers value strong teacher-learner relationships, which may positively influence learners' confidence, motivation, and classroom engagement. According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), instructional practices that prioritize learner engagement, emotional support, and student voice contribute significantly to improved academic performance and classroom participation.

However, the neutral findings related to limited student voice and creativity indicate that some teachers may still rely more on teacher-centered instruction rather than highly interactive and exploratory learning approaches. This may be influenced by curriculum demands, time constraints, classroom management concerns, or the diverse needs of learners in SNED settings. The findings imply that teachers may benefit from additional training on inquiry-based learning, collaborative learning strategies, differentiated instruction, and creative classroom activities that encourage active participation and independent thinking among learners. Similarly, Hattie (2021) emphasized that effective teaching is strengthened when learners are actively involved in discussions, problem-solving, and meaningful classroom interactions rather than simply receiving information passively.

Moreover, the findings suggest that while teachers already demonstrate positive instructional behaviors, strengthening innovative teaching practices may further improve learner engagement and classroom climate. Interactive activities, hands-on learning experiences, technology integration, and student-centered strategies may help learners become more motivated, expressive, and actively involved in the learning process. Schools may therefore consider providing professional development programs focused on creativity, learner engagement, and inclusive instructional strategies to continuously enhance teachers' instructional competence and responsiveness to diverse learner needs.

**Perceived Students' Classroom Practices (Classroom Climate)**

Students' classroom practices are important indicators of classroom climate because they reflect how learners participate, interact, and engage within the learning environment. In SNED classrooms, student participation, social interaction, and involvement in classroom activities contribute greatly to the overall atmosphere of learning and may also influence teachers' experiences and stress levels. Understanding how teachers perceive students' classroom practices provides valuable insight into the strengths and areas for improvement in promoting active engagement, positive relationships, and meaningful participation among learners with diverse needs.

**Table 7**

*Perceived Students' Classroom Practices (Classroom Climate)*

| Indicators | Mean | SD | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| Students put effort into what they do in class. | 3.08 | 0.791 | Neutral |
| The students look forward to coming to classes. | 3.38 | 0.769 | Neutral |
| Students know exactly what has to be done in our class. | 2.97 | 0.780 | Neutral |
| Students have a say in how class time is spent. | 2.89 | 0.780 | Neutral |
| Students in this class pay attention to what others are saying. | 2.97 | 0.780 | Neutral |
| Students are allowed to choose activities and how they work. | 2.89 | 0.780 | Neutral |
| Students in this class get to know each other well. | 3.27 | 0.778 | Neutral |
| Students enjoy going to this class. | 3.01 | 0.779 | Neutral |
| Students do the same type of activities every class. | 2.57 | 0.780 | Neutral |
| Friendships are made among students in this class. | 3.32 | 0.780 | Neutral |
| **Average** | **3.04** | **0.780** | **Somewhat Good** |

The results indicate that students' classroom practices are generally "somewhat good" (M = 3.04, SD = 0.780), with all indicators falling within the neutral range, suggesting moderate but not strongly developed engagement in classroom activities. Among the indicators, the highest-rated practice is students looking forward to coming to class (M = 3.38), followed by friendships being formed among students (M = 3.32). These findings suggest that learners generally feel comfortable and socially connected within the classroom environment. In the local context of SNED classrooms in Mandaue City, teachers often create welcoming and supportive classroom environments despite challenges related to limited resources, diverse learner needs, large paperwork demands, and varying learner behaviors. Many SNED teachers in Mandaue City schools continuously encourage inclusion, peer interaction, and emotional support to help learners feel accepted and motivated to attend school regularly.

The findings also suggest that learners are able to build friendships and social relationships inside the classroom. This may be influenced by the use of group activities, peer buddy systems, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) activities, and teacher-guided classroom routines commonly practiced in SNED classes. Since many learners in SNED settings experience communication, behavioral, or emotional difficulties, teachers in Mandaue City often provide constant encouragement, guided interaction, and positive reinforcement to strengthen learners' confidence and participation in classroom activities.

On the other hand, the lowest-rated practice was the perception that students engage in the same type of activities every class (M = 2.57), together with limited student voice in choosing activities (M = 2.89). These findings may imply that classroom activities are sometimes repetitive and more teacher-directed. In many public SNED classrooms in Mandaue City, teachers need to balance individualized instruction, behavior management, lesson modifications, and paperwork responsibilities, which may limit opportunities for highly varied or learner-led activities. Some teachers may also prioritize structured routines to help learners maintain focus, manage behavior, and follow classroom expectations more effectively.

Overall, the findings suggest that while students demonstrate moderate participation and positive social interaction, there is still room to improve learner engagement, classroom participation, and active involvement in the learning process. The results imply that SNED classrooms may benefit from more interactive, student-centered, and varied teaching approaches such as collaborative learning, differentiated instruction, play-based activities, technology-assisted instruction, and hands-on learning experiences. Providing learners with more opportunities to make choices, express opinions, and actively participate in classroom activities may help improve motivation, confidence, and ownership of learning.

The findings further highlight the importance of strengthening classroom practices that encourage active listening, participation, creativity, and learner autonomy. In the context of Mandaue City SNED classrooms, support from school administrators, parents, and the Department of Education may also help teachers access more instructional materials, assistive technologies, and professional development opportunities that can improve classroom engagement and learning experiences for learners with special needs.

These findings are supported by recent studies emphasizing the importance of learner engagement and autonomy in classroom learning. According to Fredricks et al. (2021), student engagement increases when learners are actively involved and given meaningful roles in classroom activities. Similarly, Reeve and Cheon (2021) found that supporting learner autonomy and providing varied learning experiences significantly improve motivation, participation, and overall classroom climate.

**Correlation Matrix of the Four Variables**

Understanding the relationship among stress level, classroom climate, student behavior, and coping strategies is essential in explaining the mental health experiences of Special Education (SPED) teachers. These variables are interconnected within the teaching environment and may influence how teachers respond to instructional demands, classroom challenges, and professional responsibilities. Examining the relationships among these variables provides

a deeper understanding of the factors that contribute to teacher well-being and highlights the role of coping strategies in managing stress and maintaining positive classroom experiences.

The correlation analysis showed generally weak to moderate relationships among the variables, with only a few relationships found to be statistically significant. This suggests that while some variables are connected, others may be influenced by different personal, environmental, and school-related factors not included in the study. In the context of Special Education (SPED), teachers' stress, coping strategies, classroom climate, and student behavior are often shaped by the complex realities of handling learners with diverse needs, behavioral concerns, paperwork demands, and instructional responsibilities.

**Table 8**
*Correlation Matrix of the Four Variables*

| Variables | Statistics | Stress level | Classroom Climate | Student Behavior |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Classroom Climate | Pearson's r | -0.206 | — | |
| | df | 35 | — | |
| | p-value | 0.222 | — | |
| Student Behavior | Pearson's r | 0.273 | -0.098 | — |
| | df | 35 | 35 | — |
| | p-value | 0.102 | 0.564 | — |
| Coping strategies | Pearson's r | -0.349* | 0.623*** | -0.232 |
| | df | 35 | 35 | 35 |
| | p-value | 0.034 | <.001 | 0.167 |

Among all the variables, the strongest positive relationship was found between coping strategies and classroom climate ($r = 0.623$, $p < .001$). This means that teachers who use more effective coping strategies are more likely to experience or create a more positive classroom environment. Teachers who remain optimistic, emotionally stable, flexible, and proactive despite stress may be better at maintaining positive relationships with learners, managing classroom routines, and responding calmly to challenging situations. In SPED classrooms, where teachers often handle learners with autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, intellectual disabilities, and emotional or behavioral difficulties, strong coping skills may help teachers remain patient, supportive, and consistent in their teaching practices.

The finding also suggests that teachers who are emotionally resilient are more capable of creating classrooms that are organized, supportive, and learner-friendly. When teachers are able to manage their own stress effectively, they may communicate better with learners, respond more positively to behavioral concerns, and establish stronger classroom relationships. This may contribute to a healthier classroom climate where learners feel safer, more supported, and more motivated to participate. According to Aulén et al. (2021), teachers who practice adaptive coping strategies are more likely to experience positive well-being and maintain supportive classroom environments. On the other hand, the strongest negative relationship was found between coping strategies and stress level ($r = -0.349$, $p = 0.034$). This indicates that teachers who use better coping strategies tend to experience lower levels of stress. The finding highlights the importance of resilience, emotional regulation, and positive coping behaviors in reducing the pressures associated with teaching. SPED teachers often face multiple responsibilities such as preparing

IEPs, conducting parent conferences, managing learner behavior, completing paperwork, and collaborating with therapists and other professionals. Teachers who know how to manage stress through problem-solving, professional support, optimism, and continuous learning may be more capable of handling these demands without becoming emotionally overwhelmed.

This result further implies that coping strategies serve as protective factors against stress and burnout. Teachers who actively seek solutions, maintain positive perspectives, and adapt to challenges may become more emotionally prepared to face difficult classroom situations. In contrast, teachers with weaker coping mechanisms may become more vulnerable to emotional exhaustion and frustration. Collie (2021) emphasized that coping resources and resilience play an important role in reducing teacher stress and supporting overall well-being.

Meanwhile, the relationship between stress and classroom climate ($r = -0.206$) was weak and not statistically significant. This means that stress levels did not strongly affect how teachers perceived their classroom climate. Although stress may influence teachers emotionally, the result suggests that many teachers are still able to maintain positive classroom environments despite experiencing stress. This may reflect teachers' professionalism, commitment, and dedication to their learners. In SPED settings, teachers often continue to provide care, structure, and support to learners even when facing personal and professional pressures.

Similarly, the relationship between stress and student behavior ($r = 0.273$) was also weak and not statistically significant. This suggests that higher stress levels were not directly associated with more problematic student behavior in the classroom. Although student behavior may contribute to teacher stress, the finding implies that teachers may still effectively manage learner behaviors despite experiencing moderate stress. Teachers' experience, classroom management skills, behavior intervention strategies, and support systems may help lessen the impact of behavioral challenges on their stress levels.

The relationship between classroom climate and student behavior ($r = -0.098$) was the weakest and was not statistically significant. This suggests that student behavior was not strongly connected to teachers' perceptions of classroom climate in this particular study. In SPED classrooms, student behavior is often influenced by many individual factors such as developmental conditions, communication difficulties, emotional regulation, sensory concerns, and family background. Because of this, behavior may not always be directly shaped by classroom climate alone.

Overall, the findings highlight the important role of coping strategies in teachers' professional lives. Among all the variables, coping strategies showed the strongest and most meaningful relationships, particularly in reducing stress and improving classroom climate. This suggests that helping teachers strengthen their coping abilities may contribute positively to their emotional well-being, classroom management, and teaching effectiveness.

The findings also emphasize the importance of school support systems. Schools may continue providing wellness programs, mentoring, stress management activities, professional development, and emotional support for teachers. Encouraging collaboration, promoting work-life balance, and recognizing teachers' efforts may further strengthen their resilience and professional satisfaction.

These findings support the study of Aulén et al. (2021), which found that adaptive coping strategies contribute to better well-being and more positive classroom environments. Likewise, Collie (2021) explained that resilience and coping resources are important in helping teachers manage stress and maintain healthy classroom interactions.

**Conclusion**

The study reveals that teachers experience a moderate level of stress, primarily driven by instructional demands such as addressing diverse learner needs, managing workload, and maintaining teaching effectiveness. Despite this, the effects of stress remain minimal, with only occasional manifestations such as mild insomnia and depressive

symptoms, suggesting that stress has not yet escalated into serious psychological or physical conditions. A key strength identified is teachers' highly effective coping mechanisms, characterized by adaptability, innovation, continuous learning, and a positive outlook toward challenges. These coping strategies appear to buffer the negative effects of stress and contribute to sustaining teacher well-being.

In terms of the classroom environment, teachers perceive student behavior as generally evident, with a notable presence of prosocial behaviors, alongside manageable levels of behavioral concerns, such as inattention and peer-related issues. Teachers also demonstrate good instructional practices, particularly in being supportive, empathetic, and responsive to students' needs, although there is room for improvement in promoting student voice and creativity. Meanwhile, students' classroom practices are assessed as somewhat good, indicating moderate engagement, participation, and autonomy, but highlighting the need for more varied and student-centered learning experiences.

Importantly, the correlation analysis underscores the central role of coping strategies, showing that effective coping is significantly associated with lower stress levels and a more positive classroom climate. Other relationships among stress, student behavior, and classroom climate were not statistically significant, suggesting that these variables may be influenced by additional contextual or environmental factors. Overall, the findings point to the importance of strengthening teachers' coping capacities while enhancing instructional and classroom practices to improve both teacher well-being and student outcomes.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed:

1. Strengthen Professional Development Programs**.** Schools should provide continuous training focused on differentiated instruction, classroom management, and inclusive education to help teachers better address diverse learner needs, which is a major source of stress.
2. Enhance Teacher Coping and Wellness Programs**.** Institutions should implement stress management and wellness initiatives, such as mental health support services, peer support groups, and resilience-building workshops, to sustain teachers' effective coping mechanisms and prevent long-term burnout.
3. Increase Student Participation and Autonomy**.** Schools should adopt approaches that give students more voice and choice in learning, such as collaborative learning, project-based activities, and participatory decision-making in class, to enhance motivation and classroom practices.
4. Strengthen Positive Classroom Climate**.** Administrators and teachers should work together to foster a supportive, inclusive, and respectful classroom environment, reinforcing prosocial behavior while addressing behavioral concerns through structured interventions such as social-emotional learning (SEL) programs.
5. Conduct Further Research**.** Future studies may explore additional variables such as leadership styles, school culture, and student-related factors, and may use larger samples or mixed methods to better understand the complex relationships among stress, classroom climate, and student behavior.

These recommendations aim to enhance teacher well-being, improve instructional quality, and promote better student outcomes, ultimately contributing to a more effective and resilient educational environment.

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