



TEACHERS' PREPAREDNESS FOR MANAGING STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH: A SCHOOL-BASED WELLNESS PROGRAM APPROACH

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Abstract

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine teachers' preparedness in managing students' mental health and its relationship with perceived challenges, training needs, skills gaps, and institutional support in four public elementary schools in Moalboal, Cebu, namely Tomonoy Elementary School, Moalboal Central Elementary School, Balabagon Elementary School, and Basdiot Elementary School. A total of 94 teachers participated in the study through complete enumeration. Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire adapted from validated instruments on mental health literacy, teacher confidence, and professional development needs. Statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation were used for data analysis. Findings revealed that teachers demonstrated a generally high level of preparedness in terms of knowledge, skills, and confidence in managing students' mental health. However, gaps were observed in specialized competencies such as formal referral procedures and structured intervention strategies. Teachers also experienced moderate challenges in terms of training and resource availability, while constraints such as workload, large class sizes, and time limitations were identified as more significant barriers. Moreover, a strong inverse relationship was found between teachers' preparedness and their perceived challenges, training needs, skills gaps, and support requirements, indicating that higher preparedness is associated with lower perceived difficulties. The study concluded that while teachers possess a strong foundational capacity to address students' mental health concerns, there remains a need for continuous professional development and strengthened institutional support to address existing gaps. It further emphasized that enhancing teachers' preparedness significantly contributes to reducing challenges in school-based mental health management. Based on these findings, the study recommended the institutionalization of a comprehensive School-Based Wellness Program, continuous mental health-related training, improved resource allocation, and workload management policies to strengthen teachers' effectiveness and promote student well-being.

Keywords: *teachers' preparedness, mental health literacy, school-based wellness program, descriptive-correlational study, elementary education, Moalboal Cebu*

INTRODUCTION

According to Lason et. al (2025) the student's mental health has become one of the critical concerns in the education environment not just in the Philippines but worldwide. This is so because the psychological and emotional challenges of the students increasingly affected the learners' academic performance, behavior, and the overall well-being. The schools were recognized as the most essential settings for the awareness of the early mental health support, and the teachers play a pivotal role in fostering the students' social, emotional and behavioral development of the students. Since the teachers interact with the students every day, they are positioned in observing the early signs of anxiety, emotional distress, behavioral changes, and social adjustment difficulties. Consequently, the



preparedness in managing the students' mental health concerns is fundamental in creating a safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environment.

This study is particularly important in the context of guidance and counseling, which emphasizes preventive and developmental support that goes beyond teachers' current capacities to provide early mental health interventions, including proper referral mechanisms. By assessing teachers' preparedness, the study aims to strengthen their ability to respond effectively to students' socio-emotional needs and contribute to a proactive school-based mental health approach.

Recent studies highlight the importance of teacher readiness in strengthening school mental health systems. According to Supreeyaporn and Sakulsriprasert (2024), mental health literacy programs improved the teacher's knowledge and the self-efficacy in supporting the students with the mental health needs. In the same manner, Detera (2025) reported that the higher levels of the teacher preparedness were associated with the improved student mental health literacy and coping skills. However, other research scholars indicated that many teachers, specifically those with limited access sustained professional development, feel underprepared in managing complex emotional and behavioral concerns (Smith & Lee, 2021). These research results underscored the continuing need to examine the teachers' competencies, confidence, and practical skills in the academic institution's contexts.

In Moalboal, Cebu, this situation is evident in across four public elementary schools such as in Tomonoy Elementary School, located at Brangay Tomonoy, Moalboal Central Elementary School, situated at Poblacion West, Balabagong Elementary School, which is in Barangay Balabagong, and Basdiot Elementary School, located at Barangay Basdiot, which are operating under the Schools' Division of Cebu Province, Department of Education (DepEd). Mandated with DepEd's School-Based Mental Health Program, which is line with the Republic Act 12080, or the Basic Educational Mental Health and Well-Being Promotion Acts, the teachers across these schools are expected to get involved in the mental health awareness seminars, psychological first aid orientations, and referral trainings. They are also tasked in collaborating with the school heads, guidance personnel, the parents, and the community stakeholders in addressing the students' emotional and psychological needs. Despite this policy framework, the actual level of the teachers' preparedness varies across schools, depending on the access to structured training, sustained capacity-building programs and the availability of the mental health professional within each school or district.

Evidence from the school reports further highlighted the issue. Each of the schools is required to submit reports to the Schools Division Office documenting bullying incidents, which are reflected in the guidance forms tracking the different student events. The observations across these reports indicated the recurring student concerns which included anxiety, behavioral issues, peer conflicts, withdrawal, low self-esteem, and emotional distress. Although several teachers are willing to help, many are unprepared in responding effectively due to limited training and the absence of a structured program. Most importantly, the teachers served as the primary responders which informally utilize strategies and approaches in addressing the students' mental health needs.

These four schools represent urban-central, semi-urban, and rural community contexts, of which the teachers frequently encounter pupils who are exhibiting academic-related anxiety, peer conflicts, bullying, low self-esteem, inattentiveness, withdrawal, irritability, and emotional distress which is linked with socio-economic challenges, parental absence and changing family dynamics. These observations underscored the needs for a systematic assessment of the teachers' preparedness in terms of knowledge, competencies, self-efficacy, and available support mechanisms.

Despite increasing attention to mental health in education, there remains a gap in understanding teachers' readiness within local public elementary school contexts, particularly under a structured school-based wellness framework. Most existing studies focus on general mental health literacy or intervention outcomes, with fewer examining teachers' preparedness, confidence, and practical capacity in policy-guided but resource-variable environments such as those found in Moalboal. This gap highlights the need for a study that assesses teachers' preparedness and informs the development of a context-responsive School-Based Wellness Program.

The expected output of this research is the design of a School-Based Wellness Program tailored to the contextual needs of the participating schools. The program will be grounded in findings regarding teachers' current competencies, challenges, and available support systems. The study aimed at evaluating the teachers' preparedness, identify gaps, and propose strategies in strengthening their training, collaboration and referral mechanisms within the school community.



The results of this study will benefit the teachers by identifying the areas for the capacity building; the school administrators and policymakers by creating and deploying program design and allocating resource; the students by enhancing access to the responsiveness and supportive learning environments; and the parents by strengthening collaborative partnerships in fostering the children's emotional and psychological well-being. In essence, this paper sought to contribute to the holistic, preventive and developmentally focused approach in the school-based mental health, which empower the teachers and in extending support to the overall growth and well-being of the learners at Moalboal, Cebu.

Research Questions

This study aimed at assessing the preparedness of the teachers in managing the students' mental health in the four selected public elementary schools in Moalboal, Cebu for School Year 2025-2026, toward the development of a School-Based Wellness Program.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What was the level of teachers' preparedness in managing students' mental health in terms of:
 - 1.1. Knowledge
 - 1.2. Skills
 - 1.3. Confidence
2. What were the challenges encountered by the teachers in managing students' mental health in terms of:
 - 2.1. Training;
 - 2.2. Resources; and
 - 2.3. Constraints?
3. What were the professional development and support needs of teachers to strengthen their preparedness in managing students' mental health?
 - 3.1. Training;
 - 3.2. Skills; and
 - 3.3. Support?
4. Was there a correlation between teachers' preparedness and their:
 - 4.1. Challenges;
 - 4.2. Training;
 - 4.3. Skills; and
 - 4.4. Support?
5. What School-Based Wellness Program approach may be proposed to enhance teachers' capacity in managing students' mental health?

Statement of Null Hypothesis

HO₁ There was no correlation between teachers' preparedness and their challenges, training, skills, and support.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This part of the paper presented the review of related literature in establishing relevant theories, research findings, and discussions concerning the teachers' preparedness in managing the students' mental health concerns. It focused on the teachers' knowledge, competencies, self-efficacy, and roles in promoting the students' well-being within the school setting. The reviewed literature served as the foundation for the development of a School-Based Wellness Program which was designed to enhance the teachers' capacity, confidence, and effectiveness in addressing the students' mental health needs.

The reviewed studies directly supported the variables which are outlined in the study's theoretical-conceptual framework. The teachers' preparedness, as highlighted in the literature, which encompassed these variables such as knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy in addressing the students' mental health concerns were aligned with the core constructed of the Mental Health Promotion Theory. The professional development, contextual challenges, and programmatic interventions were cited in the previous research to further reflect the enabling mechanisms and barriers considered in the framework. By making a synthesis of these findings, the literature



confirmed that the teachers' competencies and systematic supports were critical in determining the effectivity of the mental health promotion within the school settings, which provided empirical justification in designing and implementing a School-Based Wellness Program in the present study.

Teachers' Preparedness in Managing Students' Mental Health

Several recent research emphasized that the critical role of the teachers in extending support to the student's psychological well-being significantly contributed to the students' emotional resilience, academic performance as well as overall mental health. Across the global contexts, the teachers have been identified as the frontline observers of the students' emotional and behavioral changes, which placed them in a strategic position in recognizing the early signs of mental health concerns (Harriger et al., 2022). However, the findings showed that despite this pivotal role, several teachers felt underprepared in addressing such concerns due to limited training and lack of systematic support (Javed et al., 2021; Mukuna et al., 2023).

For example, Javed et al. (2021) examined the educators' perceptions of their competence in handling the students' emotional and behavioral difficulties. The results revealed that only a minority of the teachers felt confident in identifying or responding to mental health issues, which largely attributed this gap to insufficient pre-service and in-service training. This aligned with findings from Olaleye and Adeleke (2022), who reported the novice and experienced educators alike expressed a need for a professional development that specifically targeted psychological first aid, trauma-informed practices and stress management interventions.

School-Based Wellness Programs as a Strategic Response

The school-based wellness program had emerged as promising structures for the enhancement of mental health support. These programs integrated multisectoral strategies, psychosocial services, teacher training, peer counselling, and community involvement in order to foster the student well-being. Lee and Park (2023) emphasized that the schools adopting wellness frameworks saw an improvement of the teacher self-efficacy in managing the mental health challenges and greater student engagement in supportive services.

In the United States, Darling et al. (2021) found that the schools which implemented a comprehensive wellness programs resulted in decreasing the student anxiety and behavioral disruptions. Most importantly, the teachers reported that an increase in confidence was supported with a structured mental health resource, such as on-site counselors and collaborative planning and time dedication to wellness activities.

The same outcomes were observed in the Asian educational settings. A mixed-methods study was conducted in Singapore. According to Tan and Chua (2024) the teachers who participated in the school-based wellness initiatives reported the better understanding of mental health constructs and felt more capable of facilitating the classroom emotional support. The key components that contributed to the effectiveness of such included the routine in mental health workshops, which was reflective of supervision meetings, and integration of social-emotional learning (SEL) into the core curriculum.

Barriers to Preparedness and Wellness Program Implementation

The deployment challenges were still a perennial issue even though people were starting to realize that teacher preparedness and wellness programs were important. Some studies found that there were barriers like insufficient funding, not enough time and support for the deployment of the policies. These problems just kept on coming. Bashir and Zafar said in 2021 that schools in areas with resources have a hard time keeping wellness programs going. This is because they must focus on goals and don't have enough support for teachers. Teacher wellness programs and teacher preparedness matter a lot. The schools, in resourced communities struggled with these issues.

According to Martinez and Kim (2023), the teachers expressed the frustration such as absent continuous professional development which were tailored to actual classroom dynamics. Moreover, they highlighted that although training sessions were offered, these were often isolated events rather than ongoing, practice-based learning opportunities, a limitation that reduced long-term impact.

The Importance of Contextual Adaptation



Evidence as well suggested that the effectiveness of a wellness program and the teachers' ability to manage their mental health issues which depended on the contextual adaptation. For instance, Moro et al. (2022) cited that programs which were designed without considerations of local cultural norms and student needs had a limited acceptance from among the teachers and students alike. These initiatives co-developed with the teachers input in demonstrating the greater sustainability and relevance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design

This study employed a descriptive correlational research design which examined the relationship between the teacher's preparedness and the factors which influenced their ability in managing the students' mental health concerns in the locale of this study, such as Tomonoy Elementary School, Moalboal Central Elementary School, Balabagon Elementary School, and Basdiot Elementary School. This design allowed the systematic measurement and description of the teachers' preparedness in terms of mental health knowledge, early identification skills, referral practices, participation in mental health-related trainings, and perceived administrative and institutional support as well as the navigation of correlations between these variables and the selected teacher profile characteristics.

Quantitative data were collected through structured survey questionnaires administered to teacher-respondents across the four schools. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, and weighted means were used to summarize the variables, while inferential statistics are applied to determine the strength and direction of relationships between teachers' preparedness and factors such as years of service, training exposure, and school assignment. This approach or initiative ensured objectivity, accuracy and fostered an evidence-based interpretation of the results of the study.

The findings provided with the empirical evidence in sharing the information about the development of a School Based Wellness Program. By identifying both the levels of teacher preparedness and the institutional supports available, the research generated practical insights that can guide the enhancement of school-based mental health promotion initiatives.

Environment

The local of this research were the four public elementary schools in Moalboal, Cebu such as in Tomonoy Elementary School, located at Brangay Tomonoy, Moalboal Central Elementary School, situated at Poblacion West, Balabagong Elementary School, which is in Barangay Balabagong, and Basdiot Elementary School, located at Barangay Basdiot, which are operating under the Schools' Division of Cebu Province, Department of Education (DepEd). These schools implemented the Revised K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum and were guided by the Department of Education's School-Based Mental Health Program in accordance with Republic Act 12080, otherwise known as the Basic Education Mental Health and Well-Being Promotion Act. Within this policy framework, the teachers were expected to participate in the mental health awareness seminars, psychological first aid orientations, and referral trainings, and to collaborate with school heads, guidance personnel, parents, and community stakeholders in supporting learners' emotional and psychological well-being. As frontline practitioners, the teachers in these schools played a crucial role in identifying the early signs of anxiety, behavioral concerns, emotional distress, and social adjustment difficulties among pupils.

Across the four school settings like urban-central, semi-urban, rural-community based, and Basdiot Elementary School's community-based context, common mental health concerns have become increasingly evident. These covered the academic-related pressures such as anxiety, peer conflicts, bullying, low self-esteem, being inattentive in any form, being withdrawn and irritable, as well as emotionally distressed which were associated with the socio-economic struggles, parental absence and any family conflicts as well as varying and changing social dynamics. Although the teachers demonstrated empathy and awareness of these concerns, their level of preparedness varied which depended on the access to sustained professional development, structured capacity-building programs, and availability of mental health professionals within the school or district. In many instances, limited access to the guidance counselors or mental health focal persons resulted in the teachers functioning as primary responders which were beyond initial identification and referral.



Given these realities, the four schools provided a relevant and meaningful environment for the study. They represented diverse yet comparable public elementary contexts within the same municipality, all operating under the same national policy mandate yet experiencing varying levels of implementation support and resource availability. The observable presence of student mental health concerns, combined with differences in teacher training exposure and contextual challenges, makes these schools appropriate settings for examining teachers' preparedness in managing students' mental health. Furthermore, the shared commitment of faculty members to strengthening mental health promotion efforts supported the development of a School-Based Wellness Program tailored to their contextual needs, thereby justifying the selection of these schools as the environment of the study.

Respondents

The study involved a total of 94 respondents from four public elementary schools in Moalboal, Cebu such as Balabagon Elementary School, Basdiot Elementary School, Moalboal Central Elementary School, and Tomonoy Elementary School. These respondents were selected to represent teaching personnel directly involved in student development and guidance-related activities.

Table 1 in the next page gleaned the distribution of participants covered in this research from across the four selected schools. The largest group of respondents came from Moalboal Central Elementary School, followed by Basdiot Elementary School, Balabagon Elementary School, and Tomonoy Elementary School. In terms of sex, most of the respondents were female teachers, while the remaining respondents were male teachers.

Table 1

Distribution of Respondents

Category of Respondent	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Balabagon Elementary School		
Male	4	13.83
Female	13	4.26
Basdiot Elementary School		
Male	0	0
Female	28	29.79
Moalboal Central Elementary School		
Male	9	9.57
Female	32	34.04
Tomonoy Elementary School		
Male	0	0
Female	8	8.51
Total	94	100%

Note=94

The participants were chosen based on their active teaching loads and roles within the selected schools as well as their direct involvement in the student development and mental health support activities and initiatives. Those teachers who were unavailable, on leave, or not directly engaged in student guidance or wellness programs were excluded from the study.

This distribution of the participants provided a representative overview of teachers' perspectives across the four schools, which captured the variations in gender, experience, and school context. It ensured that the findings reflected the preparedness of teachers in managing the students' mental health and supported recommendations which were contextually relevant across these diverse elementary school settings.

Sampling Technique

The study employed complete enumeration of teaching personnel within the four selected public elementary schools in Moalboal, Cebu—Balabagon Elementary School, Basdiot Elementary School, Moalboal Central



Elementary School, and Tomonoy Elementary School. This approach ensured that all teachers directly involved in student instruction and support activities were included as respondents, providing comprehensive and representative data on teacher preparedness in managing students' mental health concerns.

Specifically, the respondents comprised actively teaching personnel who were available and willing to participate during the data collection period. Teachers who were on leave, not directly engaged in student development or mental health support activities, or outside the selected schools were excluded from the study.

There were a total 94 participants who got involved across the four schools. All eligible teachers were included which led in the captivation of the expected insights from the participants who were most knowledgeable about the deployment of the school-based mental health and wellness practices. This method as well allowed for a thorough understanding of the variations in preparedness, challenges, and professional development needs from across the different school contexts, such as urban-central, semi-urban, and rural-community based, which ensured that findings were representative of the broader elementary school in Moalboal, Cebu.

Instrument

To assess teachers' preparedness in managing students' mental health and to inform the development of a School-Based Wellness Program, this study utilized a structured questionnaire adapted from established and validated instruments in the field of teacher mental health, school wellness, and professional development. The instrument draws from the Teachers' Mental Health Literacy Scale (TMHLS – Skrzypek, 2024), the Mental Health Literacy in Education scale (MHL ED – Wei, Baxter & Kutcher, 2019), the Teacher Confidence Scale (BMC Psychology, 2019; SMHRC, 2025), and the Professional Development Needs Assessment (PDNA – Mastrorio, Trainor & Splett, 2019). Items were further adapted by the researcher to reflect the objectives of the study and the context of the four selected public elementary schools in Moalboal, Cebu—Tomonoy Elementary School, Moalboal Central Elementary School, Balabagon Elementary School, and Basdiot Elementary School. Content validation was conducted by qualified guidance and mental health specialists to ensure the relevance, clarity, and appropriateness of each item. Although collectively the items were adapted from experts, validity and reliability tests were conducted to ensure the instrument's accuracy and consistency in measuring teachers' preparedness, challenges, professional development needs, and program design perspectives.

The questionnaire was divided into four major parts that correspond directly to the research questions outlined in the Statement of Purpose. Part I – Level of Teachers' Preparedness in Managing Students' Mental Health addresses Research Question 1, focusing on teachers' Knowledge, Skills, and Confidence. The Knowledge section evaluated teachers' understanding of common student mental health concerns, including stress, anxiety, behavioral challenges, and referral procedures. The Skills section measured practical competencies in applying classroom strategies, facilitating peer support, implementing basic psychological first aid, monitoring students, and collaborating with guidance personnel or external resources. The Confidence section assessed the teachers' self-efficacy on how to handle the students' emotional and behavioral needs, on how to identify those students who required support, and whose who positively influenced their social – emotional development. Each sub-variable contained five items rated on a five-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree (5) to Strongly Agree (5).

Part II – Challenges and Gaps Teachers Encounter aligned with Research Question 2 and examined the barriers teachers face in managing students' mental health. It included the sub-variables Training, Resources, and Constraints, each containing five items. The Training section assessed the adequacy, relevance, and applicability of professional development programs. The Resources section evaluated the availability of the school materials, mental health programs, guidance personnel, and external collaborations. The Constraints section have identified practical obstacles such as limited time, class size, workload, socio-economic factors, and administrative demands that may affect teachers' capacity to provide mental health support.

Part III – Professional Development and Support Needs corresponded to Research Question 3, which explored the areas where teachers require additional capacity-building to strengthen preparedness. This part included Training, Skills, and Support sub-variables. The Training section measured the need for workshops, mental healthy literacy programs, and trauma-informed practices. The skills section focused on enhancement of the classroom-based psychosocial support, behavioral management strategies, and monitoring the student progress. The Support section assessed access to mentoring, structured wellness resources, peer collaboration, consultation with



school heads or guidance personnel, and administrative backing. Each sub-variable consisted of five items to capture teachers' development needs comprehensively.

Part IV – School-Based Wellness Program Design addressed Research Questions 4 and 5, focusing on teachers' perspectives for designing a context-responsive program. This part includes Components, Collaboration, and Effectiveness sub-variables, each containing five items. The Components section evaluated the strategies which enhanced the teachers' knowledge, skills, and confidence, integration of classroom activities, structured workshops, monitoring, and evidence-based practices. The Collaboration section assessed partnerships from among the teachers, school heads, parents, community stakeholders, and external mental health professionals. The Effectiveness section evaluated the measurable indicators for the teacher preparedness and student well-being, which included regular, assessments, feedback mechanisms and program adaptability based on the needs of both teachers and learners.

All the items in the questionnaire were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), which provided a quantitative data which were aligned to each research question. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, following Taber (2018), with values above 0.70 considered acceptable, which ensured that the instrument consistently measured the teachers' preparedness, perceived gaps, professional development needs, and program design perspectives within the selected schools. This structure directly aligns with the SOP, enabling the study to comprehensively evaluate teachers' knowledge, skills, confidence, challenges, professional needs, and program design input for developing a School-Based Wellness Program in Moalboal, Cebu.

Data Gathering Procedures

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design which assessed the teacher's preparedness in managing the students' mental health and to identify their professional development and support needs. This design was selected to describe the confidence of the teachers, examined challenges and gaps and determined how these factors related to the design of a School based Wellness Program. The study specifically targeted the teaching personnel from the four selected public elementary schools at Moalboal, Cebu, such as Tomonoy Elementary School, Moalboal Central Elementary School, Balabagon Elementary School, and Basdiot Elementary School because these schools were directly involved in student development and mental health support. The data were collected using a standardized questionnaire adapted from validated instruments, including the Teachers' Mental Health Literacy Scale (Skrzypek, 2024), Mental Health Literacy in Education (Wei, Baxter & Kutcher, 2019), Teacher Confidence Scale (BMC Psychology, 2019; SMHRC, 2025), and Professional Development Needs Assessment (PDNA – Mastroio, Trainor & Splett, 2019). The data gathering process was conducted in three main phases: pre-data gathering, actual data gathering, and post-data gathering.

Pre-Data Gathering. In this phase of the study, the researcher secured permission from the Schools Division of Cebu Province and collaborated with the school heads to facilitate the participation. The following ethical considerations were strictly followed, such as, the conduct of the informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality. So that everybody has appropriate ideas on the intention of the study, all the participants were oriented on the purpose, significance, and procedures of the study, which ensured transparency and understanding.

For consistency, the research instrument was reviewed and refined based on the feedback from the research adviser and the panel members. This was to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study's objectives and SOP. The questionnaire was validated by the guidance of a mental health specialists to confirm the content and construct validity. Only those teaching personnel who were actively employed and directly involved in the classroom and student development activities were invited to participate, whereas those filed for leave of absence and were not directly engaged in the mental health program or student support programs were excluded.

Actual Data Gathering. Upon the receipt of all the approvals, based on the documented evidence, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to the selected teacher-respondents in the four schools. Close coordination with the school heads and administrative personnel were done to ensure an orderly administration and retrieval of the instrument. Participants were oriented on the instructions and guided on how to respond independently to each item. The researcher remained available to clarify queries while maintaining the impartiality and independence of responses. Completed questionnaires were collected immediately to maintain a high retrieval rate and ensure data integrity.



Post-Data Gathering. To avoid missing or ambiguous responses from the participants, all questionnaires were reviewed for completeness and consistency as needed as possible. The validated data were encoded for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics were applied to determine the levels of teachers' knowledge, skills, and confidence in managing student mental health, as well as the prevalence of challenges, gaps, and professional development needs. To explore the relationships between these variables, inferential statistics were employed, to come-up with an appropriate design of a context-responsive School-Based Wellness Program. To provide with a comprehensive understanding of the teacher preparedness from across the four participating schools, the results were interpreted succinctly. The findings guided and evidence-based recommendations, which included targeted professional development, capacity-building initiatives, and the development of a School-Based Wellness Program which aimed at enhancing both the teacher preparedness and the student mental health outcomes at Moalboal, Cebu.

Data Analysis

Upon completion of data collection, the responses from the standardized questionnaire were organized, screened, coded, and encoded for statistical analysis. Consistent with the quantitative descriptive-correlational design of the study, descriptive and inferential statistics were used to address the Statement of the Problem.

The mean and standard deviation were computed to determine the level of teachers' preparedness in managing students' mental health in terms of knowledge, skills, and confidence (SOP 1), as well as their professional development and support needs in terms of training, skills, and support (SOP 3). To identify the challenges encountered by teachers in terms of training, resources, and constraints (SOP 2), frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used. The relationship between teachers' preparedness and their challenges, training, skills, and support needs (SOP 4) was determined using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r).

All statistical analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and interpreted at a significance level of $p < .05$. The findings provided a clear understanding of teachers' preparedness, challenges, and support needs and served as the basis for the proposed wellness program for the selected public elementary schools in Moalboal, Cebu.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher adhered with the ethical standards set by the Research Ethics Committee, through following the ethical principles of beneficence, respect, justice, confidentiality, and transparency. Upon careful checking and documentation, a certificate of compliance through an NTP was attached with REC-UV Reference No. NTPMAEDGC2026-090 dated March 27, 2026. Before the start of the study, the participants gave their informed consent to the researcher, of which in return the researcher ensured that they fully understood the content of the consent. The researcher emphasized that there were no rewards or consequences for withdrawal, and the participation was purely voluntary. With the assistance of the school principals and upon the cooperation of the teachers and advisers, the study run smoothly without interrupting any classes.

The information gathered during the conduct of the study was kept confidential and was utilized exclusively for this research. Every phase thereof was covered in the investigation following the ethical considerations which guaranteed that the findings was reliable and with integrity. The study aimed to contribute to a better understanding of teachers' preparedness in managing students' mental health and to support the development of a School-Based Wellness Program. Only selected elementary homeroom and classroom advisers were included, ensuring fair and appropriate participant selection. The study involved minimal risks, and no incentives or compensation were provided.

Confidentiality and privacy were strictly observed upon the utilization of a coding, de-identification of data, and secure storage of information, which were used solely for academic and research purposes. The study was conducted with proper approval from school authorities and without disrupting regular school activities. Debriefing and referral support were made available when necessary, and the researcher disclosed no conflict of interest throughout the conduct of the study.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part of the study presented the analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the data gathered. The results were organized according to the statement of the problem and were presented using appropriate statistical tools and tabular presentations. The discussion highlighted the significant findings regarding teachers' preparedness in managing students' mental health, including their knowledge, skills, and confidence. Furthermore, the findings were interpreted and supported by relevant literature and studies to provide a clearer understanding of the implications of the results and their contribution to the development of the proposed School-Based Wellness Program.

The Level of Teachers' Preparedness in Managing Students' Mental Health

The level of the teachers' preparedness on how to manage the students' mental health was referred to their knowledge, skills, and confidence in identifying and responding with the students' psychological and emotional needs within the school setting. Assessing this area was important because it was useful in determining the teachers' capacity to provide with an appropriate support and intervention for those learners experiencing mental health concerns. The teachers played a crucial role in the promotion of student well-being and in fostering a supportive learning environment. The findings of this research served as the basis in identifying the areas for improvement and for developing a responsive School-Based Wellness Program.

The three dimensions covered in this part of the study were conceptually distinct yet interrelated. Knowledge was referred to the teachers' cognitive understanding of the mental health concepts, which included the awareness of the signs and symptoms of emotional and behavioral struggles understanding their effects on the learning, and familiarity with the appropriate referral procedures. Skills referred to the practical and applied competencies of the teachers who implemented the classroom-based interventions to manage the student's behavior which were relevant to emotional distress, facilitating supportive activities, and collaborating with the guidance personnel or external mental health services. Meanwhile, the competence or confidence referred to the teachers perceived self-efficacy in effectively carrying out the mental – health related responsibilities, which included their assurance in identifying at-risk learners, responding appropriately to emotional needs, and making timely referral. Together, these dimensions provided with a comprehensive view of the teachers' readiness in addressing the students' mental health concerns in the school environment.

Moreover, by assessing the teachers' preparedness provided significant insights to the participants ability to efficiently and effectively support the students' mental health within the school setting. The findings served as the basis for the development of a targeted training programs, which strengthen the school support systems in enhancing the teachers' capacity to promote the students' overall well-being.

Table 2 presents the summary of teachers' preparedness in managing students' mental health in terms of knowledge, skills, and competence. The mean and standard deviation were used to determine the level of preparedness across the three dimensions and to identify the areas of relative strength and improvement among the respondents.

Table 2

Summary of Teachers' Preparedness in Managing Students' Mental Health

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Knowledge	3.78	0.85	Highly Prepared
Skills	3.68	0.89	Highly Prepared
Competence	3.51	0.88	Highly Prepared
Overall	3.66	0.87	Highly Prepared

Note: Highest-rated dimension: Knowledge ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.85$) Lowest-rated dimension: Competence ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.88$) Overall preparedness: Highly Prepared ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 0.87$)



As shown in Table 2, the teachers were generally highly prepared in managing students' mental health, as reflected in the overall mean score of 3.66 (SD = 0.87). Among the three dimensions, knowledge obtained the highest mean, followed by skills and competence, indicating that the respondents possessed a strong foundation in understanding mental health concerns while demonstrating adequate skills and confidence in providing support to students.

Teachers were generally highly prepared in managing the students' mental health, which was reflected in the overall level of preparedness across the dimensions of knowledge, skills and competence. From among these three dimensions, knowledge obtained the highest level of preparedness, which indicated that the teachers possessed a strong understanding of the common mental health concerns, particularly in recognizing the signs of anxiety, stress, and the effects of the emotional distress about the students' learning and behavior. Likewise, the teachers demonstrated a high level of preparedness in terms of skills, specifically in coordinating with the guidance personnel and in the deployment of the classroom strategies in supporting the students' emotional well-being.

However, they only demonstrated moderated preparedness in facilitating the peer support activities and in applying the basis psychological first aid. In similar manner, the teachers expressed moderate confidence in handling students who are experiencing emotional and behavioral concerns, in identifying learners which required additional mental health support as well as in addressing the students' social-emotional needs, although they were highly prepared in terms of competence. The overall findings indicated that the teachers possess the necessary preparedness in supporting the students' mental health, although certain aspect still required further strengthening.

The results implied that the teachers had established a solid foundation in extending support with the students' mental health, however, there was a need to strengthen their confidence and practical competencies in responding to a more complex mental concern. Those areas which reflected moderate preparedness suggested that opportunities for targeted professional training specifically in the psychological first aid, early detection of at-risk learners, referral procedures, and school-based intervention strategies.

According to Weist (2021), strengthening of school-based mental health training and integrated support system was essential in enhancing early intervention and teacher responsiveness. Further, the CASEL (2020) cited that the sustained capacity-building for educators was critical in ensuring effective deployment of social-emotional and mental health support in the schools. Through enhancing these capacities, it was expected that the teacher improves their capacity in providing a timely and appropriate mental health support, thereby promoting a more responsive and inclusive school environment.

Challenges the Teachers Encounter in Managing Students' Mental Health

The challenges encountered by the teachers in managing the students' mental health referred to the struggles they have experienced with relevance to training, availability of resources, and the existing institutional or situation constraints that affected their ability to efficiently and effectively support the students' psychological and emotional well-being. Examining these challenges was important in determining the barriers which limited the teachers' capacity in responding appropriately to students' mental health concerns within the school setting.

The teachers played a critical role in early identification, intervention, and support; however, their effectiveness may be influenced by the adequacy of training they received, the accessibility of the school-based resources, and the structural conditions present in their work environment. The findings provided a basis for identifying priority areas for improvement and for strengthening the development of a responsive School-Based Wellness Program.

The three dimensions of this construct were conceptually distinct but interconnected. Training referred to the extent which the teachers had access to relevant professional development opportunities, which included seminars, workshops, and capacity-building activities which focused on the mental health awareness and intervention strategies. The resources referred to the availability and adequacy of the school-based materials, facilities, and support systems which assisted the teachers in addressing the students' mental health needs, such as counselling services, instructional materials, and referral mechanisms.

Meanwhile, the constraints referred to contextual and operational barriers that hinder the teachers' ability to effectively support the students which included the large class sizes, heavy workload, limited time, and socio-economic factors which affected the learners. Together, these three dimensions provided with a comprehensive



understanding of the factors which influenced the teachers' effectiveness in managing the students' mental health in the school environment.

Table 3

Challenges the Teachers Encounter in Managing Students' Mental Health

Training		Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	Training sessions are relevant to the real classroom situations I encounter.	3.56	1.01	Agree
2.	I have received adequate training in managing students' mental health.	3.28	1.09	Neutral
3.	I feel that training opportunities provided are sufficient to strengthen my mental health management skills.	3.37	1.07	Neutral
4.	I have access to continuous professional development programs related to student mental health.	3.17	1.10	Neutral
5.	I am able to apply what I learned in trainings to address students' emotional and behavioral needs.	3.37	1.06	Neutral
Composite Mean / SD		3.35	1.07	Moderate Challenge
Resources		Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	Mental health materials and information are available in the school.	3.07	1.09	Neutral
2.	There are accessible resources that support students' mental health.	3.19	1.08	Neutral
3.	The school provides materials that promote mental health awareness.	3.32	1.05	Neutral
4.	Facilities and resources for mental health support are available in the school.	3.02	1.10	Neutral
5.	Students have access to mental health programs and support services.	3.23	1.06	Moderate Challenge
Composite Mean / SD		3.17	1.08	Moderate Challenge
Constraints		Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	Time constraints make it difficult to provide adequate mental health support in class.	3.60	1.02	Agree
2.	Large class sizes affect my ability to monitor students' emotional well-being.	3.73	0.99	Agree
3.	Heavy workload prevents me from addressing students' emotional or behavioral concerns consistently.	3.70	1.00	Agree
4.	Administrative or policy demands reduce the time available for mental health support activities.	3.59	1.03	Agree
5.	Socio-economic challenges of students limit the effectiveness of classroom mental health strategies.	3.43	1.06	Neutral
Composite Mean / SD		3.61	1.02	High Challenge
Overall Mean/ SD		3.38	1.06	Moderate Challenge

Note. n=94: 4.21–5.00, Strongly Agree (Very High Challenge); 3.41–4.20, Agree (High Challenge); 2.61–3.40, Neutral (Moderate Challenge); 1.81–2.60, Disagree (Low Challenge); 1.00–1.80, Strongly Disagree (Very Low Challenge)



The results showed that teachers experienced an overall moderate level of challenges in managing students' mental health across training, resources, and constraints. It was observed that the constraints emerged as the most prominent area of difficulty, which indicated that the workload, large class sizes, time limitation, and administrative demands had significantly hindered the teachers' capacity in consistently addressing the students' mental health needs. The training – related concerns were generally perceived as moderate, which suggested that while professional development opportunities existed, they were not always fully aligned with the classroom realities which the teachers were facing every day. In the same manner, resource-related challenges were also found to be moderate, which implied that the school-based materials and support system were available although not fully adequate to meet the teachers' needs. The overall findings indicated that the teachers had encountered a systemic and operational barriers which affected the efficient and effective delivery of mental health support in the schools, which was consistent with the earlier studies on the teacher preparedness and school mental health support systems (Reinke et al., 2020; Fazel et al., 2022).

The findings implied that teachers' effectiveness in managing students' mental health had been influenced by structural and institutional limitations within the school setting. According to Reinke et al. (2020), the teachers were often placed in the roles which required addressing the student mental health concerns without sufficient systemic support, and this had contributed to the role strain and reduced effectiveness. In the same vein, UNESCO (2021) highlighted that gaps between the training and actual classroom demands had a limited and practical application of the knowledge and skills. These conditions had suggested that, without targeted interventions, teachers' capacity to support student mental health would have remained constrained, thereby affecting the overall effectiveness of school-based mental health initiatives.

Professional Development and Support Needs of Teachers in Managing Students' Mental Health

The professional development and support needs of the teachers in managing the students' mental health referred to the areas of training, skills enhancement, and the institutional support which were required from the teachers to effectively address the students' psychological and emotional needs within the school setting. Through the examination of these needs, it was important that in identifying the specific interventions which were necessary to strengthen the teachers' capacity in providing a timely, appropriate, and effective mental health support for the learners. The teachers served as the frontline personnel in the schools, and their effectiveness in responding with the mental health concerns which was influenced by the adequacy of the training opportunities, the development of the relevant competencies as well as the availability of the sustained institutional and collegial support. The findings provided with a basis for the creation of a targeted interventions and for developing a responsive School-Based Wellness Program which addressed the identified gaps in the teacher preparedness and support systems.

The three dimensions covered in this construct conceptually differed to one another but closely interrelated. Training referred to the structured professional development opportunities which were provided to the teachers, such as seminars, workshops, and in-service training aimed at enhancing the mental health awareness and interventions skills.

The skills referred to the practical competencies of the teachers in applying the mental health strategies in the classroom settings, which included the identification of at-risk learners, by deploying appropriate interventions, and collaborating with the guidance personnel.

Meanwhile, support referred to the institutional, administrative, and collegial assistance which were provided to the teachers, which included the access to mental health specialists, administrative backing, and a supportive school environment which enabled effective implementation of the mental health – related responsibilities. Together, these dimensions provided a comprehensive understanding of the professional development and support requirements necessary to strengthen teachers' capacity in managing students' mental health.

Table 4 presents the professional development and support needs of teachers in managing students' mental health in terms of training, skills, and support. The mean and standard deviation were used to determine the extent of teachers perceived needs in each dimension. The results provide insights into the areas where teachers require additional capacity-building opportunities and institutional assistance to effectively address students' mental health concerns and promote their overall well-being.



Table 4

Professional Development and Support Needs of Teachers in Managing Students' Mental Health

Training		Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	Need more training on mental health literacy	4.31	0.71	Strongly Agree
2.	Need workshops on psychological first aid and interventions	4.28	0.74	Strongly Agree
3.	Need access to trauma-informed teaching programs	4.22	0.76	Strongly Agree
4.	Need training on emotional and behavioral challenges	4.35	0.69	Strongly Agree
5.	Need continuing professional development in school mental health	4.40	0.66	Strongly Agree
Composite Mean / SD		4.31	0.71	Very High Need
Skills		Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	Need training in strategies for anxiety and stress reduction	4.25	0.75	Strongly Agree
2.	Need guidance in handling complex emotional cases	4.22	0.77	Strongly Agree
3.	Need hands-on workshops for practical mental health strategies	4.33	0.70	Strongly Agree
4.	Need skill enhancement in psychosocial support and behavior management	4.18	0.79	Agree
5.	Need improvement in monitoring mental health interventions	4.10	0.81	Agree
Composite Mean / SD		4.22	0.76	Very High Need
Support		Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	Need mentoring from guidance personnel or mental health professionals	4.36	0.68	Strongly Agree
2.	Need access to school-based wellness resources and tools	4.30	0.72	Strongly Agree
3.	Need peer support and collaborative learning opportunities	4.21	0.76	Strongly Agree
4.	Need regular consultation with school heads or counselors	4.34	0.70	Strongly Agree
5.	Need administrative support for mental health initiatives	4.40	0.65	Strongly Agree
Composite Mean / SD		4.32	0.70	Very High Need
Overall Mean/ SD		4.28	0.72	Very High Need

Note. $n=94$: 4.21–5.00, Strongly Agree (Very High Need); 3.41–4.20, Agree (High Need); 2.61–3.40, Neutral (Moderate Need); 1.81–2.60, Disagree (Low Need); 1.00–1.80, Strongly Disagree (Very Low Need)

The findings cited that the teachers expressed a very high level of needs for professional development and the institutional support in managing the students' mental health. From across the following dimensions such as training, skills, and support dimensions, the respondents consistently emphasized the necessity of strengthening their competencies in mental health literacy, psychological first aid, trauma-informed teaching as well as the handling of emotional and behavioral challenges from among the learners. The teachers highlighted the need as well for practical, hand-on training which translated directly into a classroom application, specifically in addressing anxiety, stress, and complex student cases. In addition, the results reflected that support-related needs were highly prioritized specifically in terms of mentoring, collaboration with the guidance personnel, the access to mental health resources, and the stronger administrative backing. The overall data suggested that the teachers recognized their responsibilities in supporting the student's mental health, however, they felt that their current preparation was insufficient without a sustainable, structured, and system-supported professional development.

The findings implied that strengthening the school mental health systems required not only the teacher's awareness but also the continuous institutional investment in the capacity building and support mechanisms. As emphasized by the School Mental Health frameworks, the teachers were central to early identification and support of the student's mental health concerns, however, their effectiveness depended heavily on the training, supervision,



and organizational support. The strong demand for the mental health literacy and trauma- informed training was aligned with the findings in the study of Kutcher, Stan and Wei, Yifeng (2020–2023) which emphasized that the teacher mental health literacy had significantly improved early recognition and referral behaviors however required continuous reinforcement through professional development. In the same vein, the World Health Organization (2022) underscored that school-based mental health interventions were necessary and effective when the educators were equipped with the ongoing training and supported with the accessible school mental health systems. These findings implied that without structured training and institutional support, the teachers might struggle to fully perform their duties and function as mental health care advocates and implementers.

Correlation Between Teachers' Preparedness and Their Challenges, Training, Skills, and Support

This part of the findings presented the correlation between the teacher's preparedness in managing the students' mental health and their challenges, training, skills as well as the support. It examined the extent which these factors were associated with the teacher's level of preparedness in addressing the students' psychological and emotional needs. The analysis provided with the evidence on whether sufficient training, institutional support, and professional competencies had significantly influenced the teachers' readiness in handling the mental health concerns in the school setting.

Table 5

Correlation Between Teachers' Preparedness and Their Challenges, Training, Skills, and Support

Variables	r-value	p-value	Interpretation	Decision
Preparedness vs. Challenges	-0.63	< 0.001	Strong Negative Significant Correlation	Reject HO ₁
Preparedness vs. Training Needs	-0.72	< 0.001	Strong Negative Significant Correlation	Reject HO ₁
Preparedness vs. Skills Needs	-0.69	< 0.001	Strong Negative Significant Correlation	Reject HO ₁
Preparedness vs. Support Needs	-0.75	< 0.001	Strong Negative Significant Correlation	Reject HO ₁

Note. $n = 94$ $\pm 0.81 - \pm 1.00$, Very Strong Positive/Negative Correlation; $\pm 0.61 - \pm 0.80$, Strong Positive/Negative Correlation; $\pm 0.41 - \pm 0.60$, Moderate Positive/Negative Correlation; $\pm 0.21 - \pm 0.40$, Weak Positive/Negative Correlation; $\pm 0.00 - \pm 0.20$, Very Weak/No Correlation

The findings indicated a strong inverse relationship between teachers' preparedness in managing students' mental health and their perceived challenges, training needs, skills gaps, and support requirements. This means that as teachers became more prepared in handling students' mental health concerns, their perceived need for additional training, skills enhancement, and institutional support tended to decrease. The results further suggested that teachers who demonstrated higher levels of preparedness were less likely to experience difficulties in managing mental health-related concerns in the classroom, while those with lower preparedness reported greater needs across all identified areas. Overall, the data implied that preparedness played a significant role in reducing perceived professional gaps and challenges in addressing students' mental health needs.

The findings implied that strengthening the teacher's preparedness had a direct and meaningful impact on reducing the odds they have been experiencing as regards to the support extended to students' mental health. This supported the view that teacher preparedness was a critical factor in the effective implementation of the school - based mental health initiatives. As specified in the Mental Healthy frameworks, the teachers served as the frontline responders in identifying and addressing the student mental health concerns, however, their effectiveness depends heavily on the adequate training, skills development, and institutional support. According to Kutcher, Stan and Wei, Yifeng (2020) the increase in mental health literacy among the educators improves the confidence and reduces the perceived barriers in managing the students' psychological needs. The findings therefore implied that enhancing the



teacher's preparedness could lead to a more efficient, responsive, and sustainable school-based mental health support systems.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it was concluded that the teachers had demonstrated a generally high level of preparedness in managing the students' mental health in terms of knowledge, skills, and confidence, which indicated that they possessed a strong foundational capacity in recognizing and responding to the learners' emotional and behavioral needs. However, the gaps were still evidence in a more specialized competencies such as formal referral procedures, structured interventions, and sustained application of mental health strategies, which suggested the need for further augmentation through a targeted professional development.

Further, it was concluded that the teachers experience a moderate to high levels of struggles in terms of training, resources, and constraints specifically those who are affected with workload, time limitations, and limited access to a continuous mental health-related support. Moreover, a significant inverse relationship existed between teachers' preparedness and their perceived challenges and development needs, implying that strengthening teachers' preparedness through continuous training, skills development, and institutional support would likely reduce the difficulties they encounter and improve their overall effectiveness in addressing students' mental health concerns.

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