**Difficulties of Teachers in Handling Learners at Risk of Dropping Out**

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**Abstract:**

This research aimed to determine the level of difficulties of teachers in handling learners at risk of dropping out in Public Elementary Schools in a District under a medium-sized School Division of Bacolod City for School Year 2023-2024 which will be the basis for the development of an intervention program. Data needed for this descriptive study was collected from 123 public elementary school teachers using a self-made data-gathering instrument that passed stringent tests of validity and reliability. The ensuing analysis found that most respondents belonged to the younger group, had higher educational backgrounds, taught in the lower grade level (Key Stage 1), and belonged to the lower-income group and lower plantilla position. Subsequent analysis showed a moderate level of difficulties of teachers in handling learners at risk of dropping out. Meanwhile, a significant difference was found in motivation in attending the class, learner's attitude, parental/family support, and social factors when grouped according to age, highest educational attainment, grade level, average family income, and plantilla position. This means that teachers face a myriad of difficulties in their profession, from heavy workloads and limited resources to diverse student needs and emotional tolls, especially in handling at-risk learners, which may affect their teaching profession, motivation, and students' participation in school. Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrate remarkable resilience and dedication in their commitment to educating and empowering the next generation.

**Keywords:** Challenges, Difficulties, Teachers, Students at Risk

**Introduction:**

**Nature of the Problem**

Teachers play an essential role in creating an environment that fosters student success and positive behavior. However, most teachers will eventually have to deal with the difficulty of instructing students who have a higher probability of failing academically or dropping out of school, which requires alternative approaches to education (Burleigh,2019).

The Philippines currently has the highest dropout rates among all ASEAN countries. According to Basic Education Philippine Statistics, the elementary level, including private and public schools, had a leave rate of 0.23 percent in 2018-2019, while the school leaver rate for 2019-2020 was 0.62 percent. One of the primary programs designed to increase participation rate among learners is the DORP (DROPOUT REDUCTION PROGRAM), institutionalized by DepEd through (DepEd Order No. 74, s. of 2010), which mandates the schools and division offices to conduct identification of learners who are most likely to drop out to design pertinent intervention programs.

Parimala (2019) believed that the big challenge for any teacher when attending class lies in understanding the different learning abilities of the students as how he motivates, guides, and encourages the students when they underperform, lose their focus, and are distracted due to various circumstances. James (2018) explained that positive professional attitudes of teachers concerning their teaching job would go a long way in bringing about positive performance of the students in the classroom while negative attitudes demonstrated by teachers in the discharge of their responsibilities may mar students’ academic performance.

The researcher found several factors that may eventually lead to a student dropping out of school, including the inability of some learners to meet expectations for their performance and a lack of motivation to continue. The researchers’ interest made her identify the obstacles they face when working with learners at risk of dropping out to keep them engaged and motivated. Therefore, a collaborative effort from educators, administrators, policymakers, and the community is required to create an educational environment conducive to student success and address the multifaceted challenges leading to dropout rates.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on David Perkin's Theory of Difficulty (2007), which accounts for the "harder part" of every job of people. Perkin emphasized mastering difficult skills and knowledge to get a tough job done. Perkin equally posited that it is much easier to resolve difficult situations if there is established knowledge of the domain. The threshold concept of this theory is like having a portal, opening a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something.

Tomlinson (2015) describes this concept as a robust theory of difficulty that finds the typical trouble spots for students in each subject area and provides a causal analysis of the reasons behind them to improve teaching and learning. Teachers' responses to recurrent difficulties need to be revised in everyday teaching. One not-uncommon reaction is to blame the learners' weaknesses and keep teaching the same way. An even more effective response would be to "teach harder," devoting more time and energy to solving problems without conducting a causal analysis of why they are problematic. The best method is to "teach smarter" using a causal analysis that has been improved through practice.

This theory works best for this study because it accounts for the challenges or difficulties encountered by teachers in handling learners at Risk of Dropping Out. Within the framework of at-risk learners, it highlights the significance of information delivery that aligns with the learner's readiness, guarantees distinct learning goals, and offers suitable direction where educators may develop knowledge and approaches to better address the unique needs and challenges faced by at-risk students to foster a more inclusive and supportive educational environment for all.

The results of this study will significantly contribute to laying the groundwork for discussing the critical skills for implementation.

**Literature Review**

A prominent factor contributing to students' school dropouts is poor teacher motivation as an explanation for teacher absenteeism, with poor remuneration emerging as teachers’ main reason for not attending school and/or class (O’Sullivan,2022). She explores using financial incentives, which have been sidelined within the education aid architecture, to improve teacher motivation, address teacher absenteeism, and improve learning.

Teachers are expected to be flexible and navigate their way out amid their workloads. To balance all these forces and work successfully, the teachers must have positive attitudes, which requires support mainly from the administrators and supervisors, and failure to which they suffer stress and burnout leads to less job satisfaction. They added that a hostile teaching environment, such as uncooperative and unfriendly learners, can contribute to the teachers' work challenges and lead to frustrations, stress, low-quality teaching, and, ultimately, low job satisfaction. Nevertheless, when the supervisor and the teachers relate well, and the supervisors' support and trust are assured, the quality of teaching and a rise in job satisfaction levels can be achieved (Dornyei & Muir, 2019).

At-risk students need educators dedicated to their specific learning needs and knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction. Providing skilled educators for at-risk students helps to minimize the instructional challenges they may face in the classroom. Educators must not only be skilled but willing to provide quality instruction to at-risk students even when they are reluctant to learn (Jackson, 2013).

On the other hand, many teachers and parents have some difficulties maintaining smooth and continuous cooperation and partnership in the context of taking care of their children and providing them with the necessary knowledge, competencies, skills, and personal qualities (Mazmishvili et al., 2019).Parents usually need more pedagogical background to ensure proper guidance based on the appropriate didactic grounding, so teachers must be responsible for coordinating the educational process.

Ancillary services are responsibilities assumed by teachers outside of the classroom for improved school performance, such as home visits, feeding programs, skill remediation, enhancement activities, coaching various contests, coordinators for multiple areas, counseling pupils, and mentoring co-teachers. However, teachers encountered problems relative to the delivery of ancillary services because of time constraints, unfinished competencies, and financial woes (Villanueva et al.,2022).

Many teachers deal with difficulties in and out of the classroom, which can make the job seem overwhelming at times. Poor working conditions also affect teacher motivation. Teachers struggle with workloads, misalignment between the teacher’s expertise and the subjects they are teaching, their teaching methods for diverse students, a shortage of textbooks and equipment, and a lack of exposure to extra and co-curricular activities all have a significant impact on how students are taught and how they learn (Jomuad et al., 2021).

According to Villanueva and David (2020), managing student behavior in the classroom is challenging for teachers. In the educational system, in particular, the teachers who deal with the behavior of the students have an utmost challenge of developing human well-being because of the deterioration in values and behaviors of the modern generation, which affect the formation of values such as the mode of speaking, choice of words and even respect for parents and old. Teachers must build a classroom environment where positive interactions are the norm and punitive consequences are minimized.

According to (De Stasio et al., 2017), social factors are undeniably essential for society's wealth, health, peace, and security. Burnout is a stage of stress that many of the teachers go through at different stages in their lives which may cause stress and interfere with work-life balance. Excessive workloads put personal human capabilities to the test, resulting in tension, uneasiness, irritation, and aggravation.

On barriers to teacher planning for at-risk students, it found that teachers are also very concerned about individualized instruction that considers the developmental stages and learning styles of their students. It is challenging for teachers to plan for the entire class when different teachers need different amounts of time to complete the same task. Additionally, they emphasized that students differ in their maturity levels, learning preferences, and learning needs (Bulgren,2014).

A study conducted on challenges of novice teachers in Ghana revealed that novice teachers faced problems with time management, lack of resources for teaching and learning, student indiscipline, their students’ inability to understand the lessons taught, lack of students’ interest, and inability of novice teachers to complete their syllabus (Boakye & Ampiah, 2017). Many teachers need more abilities to manage classrooms, exceptionally diverse classrooms. Additionally, novice teachers need help to engage in complex and potentially conflict-provoking dialogues with students when dealing with diverse student cohorts. During their first few years as professional teachers, novice teachers encounter many difficulties and challenges. Some of these issues may impact students' academic performance, particularly those at risk of dropping out (Çakmak et al., 2018).

On the challenges beginning teachers experience in the early years of teaching, found out that teachers have difficulty developing teaching practices and creating a teaching identity in a challenging context in the school surrounded by the multi-layered concerns of everyday classroom problems and in a vague context within the profession. These challenges affect new teachers' job satisfaction and their commitment to teaching, especially to at-risk students. The challenges beginning teachers experience in the early years of teaching include managing the classroom, workload, and administrative demands, seeking support to cope with them, dealing with new curricula, and related resource shortages (Kozikoğlu & Senemoğlu,2018).

Sozen (2018) stated that inexperienced teachers faced problems including conflicts between classroom learning and real-world applications, pressure to complete assignments on time, anxiety about being observed, and cultural adjustment. Due to inexperience, challenges such as managing the classroom, behavioral problems, discipline, adhering to the curriculum's pace, dealing with students' varying skill levels, managing time in and out of the classroom, and understanding the law and students' rights may arise. Higher rates of burnout were seen in younger teachers, particularly in terms of emotional tiredness and disengagement from the field.

According to Kazak, E., and Koyuncu, V. (2021), a study about Undesired Student Behaviors, the Effects of These Behaviors, and Teachers' Coping Methods to risk students states that teachers who encounter undesired behaviors in the classroom can consider these three approaches. First, the teacher can allow the student to see the problem and adopt the approach of letting the student solve the negative behavior himself/herself before making an evaluation and judgment. Second, the teacher may try to punish without understanding the reasons for the behavior. Third, the teacher can support students in changing behavior by partnering with them and using their suggestions. In short, students' undesired behaviors cause problems for teachers. If the teacher leads his/her classroom inappropriately, there is a risk of chaos, further increasing inappropriate behavior. Therefore, teachers should effectively manage their classrooms by adopting appropriate disciplinary strategies to reduce inappropriate behaviors and use appropriate coping methods. In the education process, most teachers, especially those new to the profession, encounter undesired student behaviors, and the continuity of these behaviors in the classroom environment negatively affects teachers' job.

According to Jamaludin and You (2019) on burnout levels of the educators with respect its educational level that bachelor’s degree holders are less-experienced educators and have less responsive to their students than the experienced ones. This might be due to the lack of experience in teaching and handling students, especially their diverse behavior. Thus, it can be deduced that the educators’ lack of teaching efficacy will lead to a deterioration of performance in their career. This phenomenon can be overcome if school authorities and administrators provide professional development programs where they can increase their self-esteem by being teachers.

On the challenges teachers encounter in managing inclusive classrooms, individualized education plans are essential to developing special needs children. She found out that some teachers, especially those who have never had any experience with children with special needs, may find it difficult to adjust their teaching routine and lesson plans from a typical teaching method to a more specialized teaching method to be able to accommodate children with special needs or challenges. Many educators need help to adopt inclusive education. The issues faced by instructors in managing inclusive classrooms were categorized based on the data collected into the following themes: lack of teacher training, lack of competencies, lack of concrete materials, huge classrooms, time management, and assessment (Thwala,2015).

On challenging of behaviors in primary classrooms of a primary teacher in India showed several types of behaviors in classrooms as challenging, such as distractibility (low attention span), disobedience (not following rules), delinquency (lying or stealing), and aggression (bullying, damaging property. He found out that there is a recent increase in students' challenging behavior in India that has also aggravated anxiety among teachers. The presence of challenging behavior in the classroom significantly impacts teachers and students, creating a stressful and disruptive environment and adversely affecting student–teacher, which has led to a stressful classroom environment for teachers (Patnaik,2023).

According to Nurlaily et al. (2019), which focuses on elementary school teacher obstacles in problem-based learning states that students at higher levels, the students are trained to think through the learning process stage. However, teachers find it challenging to direct students to problems that require solutions, and they need enough time to organize students in group activities. Also, they need help dividing time when guiding groups because students still wait for the teacher to explain to the group without doing it themselves first. Another difficulty faced is making students actively ask questions or respond to learning activities, and feedback from problem-solving is less profound. Thus, the students needed to be trained to identify and understand the problem. Moreover, the students also needed stronger prior knowledge and were not accustomed to understanding the contextual problems because the Problem-Based Learning model had never been previously applied.

Zikry and Ceobanu (2020), on challenges of teachers at risk in Israel, found many professional difficulties facing teachers working with at-risk populations, claiming that they tend to perpetuate their failure in three processes and identified as helplessness, wrong identity, and blame. This pattern is characterized by the teacher's guilt and shame for the lack of success and ability to cope with difficulties. Teachers are shattering their professional identity, as working with a weak population is inferior and worthless, and the teacher's fault is caused by his lack of system success. As a result, blamed for his reaction to the system, he does not learn from or benefit from his unsuccessful experiences. This language encourages unprofessional behavior and adversely affects staff morale and sense of efficiency.

According to (Almazova et al., 2020) on the challenges of teachers in terms of computer literacy, electronic environment support, academic staff readiness, and efficient online education processes found that even before the pandemic, seasoned teachers had distinct challenges when it came to pedagogy is the integration of information and technology. They find it hard to be accustomed to technology because they are used to different strategies. Teachers need help incorporating ICT skills in promoting critical thinking with their learners. Undoubtedly, these factors are vital for implementing the learning delivery in the new normal.

On Parent-teacher relations challenges reveal the great tension between the two sides and a plethora of difficulties, including limitations on the time and place available to teachers for communicating with parents, differences in social status and gender, the teachers' clear preference for working with the children, a perception of the teachers' role as one in which pedagogy is in the center, aggression on the part of the parents, and a failure on both sides to coordinate expectations of (Haisraeli & Fogiel-Bijaoui, 2021).

According to Butler et al. (2019) on communicative challenges in the parent-teacher relationship to students who need special help found that teachers and parents often disagree about their ideas of who should be contributing what information and what their respective roles should be in the relationship where lack of communication on the part of parents is the factor that most challenged their interactions especially if teachers are new in the career which they have low confident in their knowledge and skills. They need to be more expert in having meaningful conversations with parents. They did not understand how or why communication was limited but strongly felt they could only meet student needs with this collaborative parent input. Parents expressed frustration when they felt as if schools were doing all of the talking and parents were simply there to listen.

Erdener (2018) found that parental involvement in at-risk students at both elementary and high school levels and teacher education levels, especially teachers with bachelor's degrees, affect the level of parent involvement in schools. It stated that educator attitudes also significantly impacted the amount of parent participation. This teacher needed to gain more knowledge of how to successfully encourage and implement parent involvement, and little assistance was provided by building supervisors. Both teachers and administrators needed help with opportunities to include parents in planning policy for the school or curriculum decisions.

The communication barrier between teachers and parents in primary school is that lack of technology can limit communication opportunities. The new technologies that provide convenience, efficiency, and effectiveness in knowledge transfer are essential in developing parent-teacher communication. However, teachers should investigate whether they can benefit from the new technology, as they should not only assume that some parents have access to it. However, many educators and parents still need help to use technology effectively, placing more value on conventional paper-and-pencil communication. Inexperienced teachers encounter almost all kinds of barriers—mainly personal barriers—more than the more experienced ones. These teachers cannot develop sufficient knowledge and skills in communication; thus, it shows that the greatest problems that novice teachers face are related to communication with parents as well (Ozmen et al., 2016).

In low-poverty schools, a study conducted in Virginia found that students and parents are struggling because of a lack of resources in schools with a high rate of less experienced teachers. The students in these schools receive an education, but it is not the education they deserve. This results in the teachers getting lower salaries and needing better education to teach students. This means that the school will not have advanced courses, and the students will struggle in classrooms, resulting in a negative perception and lack of parents' trust in teachers to provide them with the best education for their children (Maffea,2020).

On socio-emotional challenges, it was found that teachers can directly influence their students' socioemotional status and development, either in a positive or a negative sense. Socio-emotionally competent teachers have higher levels of self-awareness, know how to manage their emotions, behavior, and relationships. They are most likely to carry out more effective classroom management and have a more significant impact on their students' socio-emotional and academic. In contrast, when teachers lack socio-emotional skills and access to training, resources, or techniques to foster the socio-emotional and/or academic development of their students, their behaviors and actions can also produce adverse outcomes for their students. Social factors are undeniably essential for the wealth, health, peace, and security of society (Jones et al., 2013).

The effect of low salaries on teachers' academic performance in Liberia describes that teachers' low wages make raising a family on one income nearly difficult; many teachers labor outside the classroom to make ends meet. The greatest instructors have left the profession because of the ongoing fight for money. Long hours, little income, and a lack of support and respect have pushed them down. Because of this, many teachers work at more than one school to increase their income or provide for their families. As a result, only some students will receive their best effort equally, and their performance will be harmed, particularly at-risk students ((Mabhoyi,2020).

Enerio (2020) showed that one of the public schools in the Philippines found high levels of stress among individuals who have excessive workloads, which means long or unpredictable hours, too many responsibilities such as supervising other teachers, and work at a too rapid pace are characteristics of a work overload. Master teachers are expected to conduct action research, but the study found that they are not skillful in conducting classroom research while mentioning that public elementary teachers were in doubt about their capability to write research. Therefore, it might cause mental distress for employees.

Gurung (2021) on challenges faced by teachers in online distance learning especially seasoned teachers' challenges and struggles, identified that lack of technical or software knowledge among teachers was one of the challenges faced by teachers in online distance learning. It shows that teachers had difficulty in instruction due to their lack of technical skills. This posed a challenge to the seasoned teachers because of their limitations in terms of knowledge in using online strategies, freely expressing themselves, and privacy or personal space.

Quizana and Espiritu(2023) on challenges encountered and coping strategies used by teachers in Public Elementary Schools of the Third Congressional District, Division of Quezon, revealed that dealing with behavioral problems, communication challenges, lack of parental involvement, lack of materials, and dealing with chronic absenteeism are among the challenges teachers encountered to learners with Autism Spectrum Disorders, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and Dyslexia with special educational needs that are handled by teachers in SPED inclusive education program. The common teaching strategies that teachers use when they are instructing learners are the following: using visual aids, educational videos, positive reinforcement, simplification of the lesson, consistent routines, peer tutoring, giving clear instructions, giving written handouts, reading materials, repeated instructions, giving multiple examples, using individualized learning instructions, cooperative and experimental learning implementation of SPED inclusive education programs for learners with special educational needs.

Haro and Haro (2022), in a study-based report on the challenges of teachers in the new normal in one of the public schools in the Philippines, during the new normal states that during the new normal education, many challenges were expected in education—the instant changes of the world present challenges in our education system., teachers in the new normal would have to employ new practices and methods of supervision both professionally and emotionally to adapt to the virus outbreak changes fully. The report provides a structured timeline intervention, such as orientation, use of technology, and digital creation, but teachers were also having difficulty addressing the newly established standard. Some of the teachers ‘difficulties are in parents who lack knowledge in assisting their children and some who do not respond immediately due to unstable internet connection or do not have available gadgets.

Plaza and Jamito (2021), on financial conditions and challenges among public school teachers, found that debt is still a significant challenge in the financial well-being of public-school teachers in the Philippines. It showed further that one of the contributory factors was the impaired financial capability of many of the teacher's spouses, for the family might have to earn income to address the financial difficulties. It further revealed that teachers' financial challenges occurred when their monthly income was insufficient for household, school, and personal expenses, and unforeseen situations happened when the financial aspect could not cope.

**Purpose Statement**

This study aimed to determine the level of difficulty of teachers in Handling Learners at Risk of Dropping Out in one of the districts in a medium-sized school Division in Central Philippines for the School Year 2023-2024 as the basis for an intervention plan.

Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of the following variables?
   1. Age
   2. Grade Level
   3. Highest Educational Attainment
   4. Average Monthly Income
   5. Plantilla Position
2. What is the level of difficulties of teachers in handling learners at Risk of Dropping Out according to the following areas?
   1. Motivation in attending the class
   2. Learner’s Attitude
   3. Parental/Family Support
   4. Social Factors
3. Is there a significant difference in the level of difficulties of teachers in handling learners at Risk of Dropping Out when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables?

**Materials and Methods**

**Research Design**

This study utilized the descriptive research design, which is believed to be appropriate in measuring the level of difficulty of teachers in Handling Learners at Risk of Dropping Out and whether a significant difference exists when grouped and compared according to the variables, age, grade level, highest educational attainment, average monthly income, plantilla position.

**Respondents of the Study**

The study's respondents were 123 teachers of a district medium-sized division from a total population of 179. The researcher used stratified sampling, a random sampling technique, and the Cochran formula was applied to find the sample size since the number of respondents is quite large. To get the percentage, the respondents from each school were divided by the total number of respondents and multiplied by the sample size. The researcher randomly selects the respondents from each school using the lottery technique.

**Instruments**

A survey questionnaire was used in gathering the data to determine the level of difficulty of teachers in Handling Learners at Risk of Dropping Out were it was subjected to validity (4.90=excellent) and reliability (0.874=good). The questionnaire was divided into two parts wherein part I deals with the profile of respondents in terms of age, grade level, highest educational attainment, average monthly income, plantilla position. Part 2 contained the questionnaire proper consisting of 40 items. There were 10 line items per area. The respondents were asked to rate each item using the five-point Likert scale, which contains the following scores: 5 – Always; 4 – Often; 3 – Sometimes; 2 – Rarely; and 1 – Almost Never.

**Procedure**

For the smoother conduct of the study, the researcher sought permission from the School Heads and the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS) through the Public Schools District Supervisor (PSDS) to undertake the study. Accordingly, a letter request was sent to the school heads. Upon approval, the researcher scheduled the questionnaire's administration at a mutually convenient time for the respondents and the researcher.

The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the target respondents. An orientation was done to present the study's objectives and how to answer the survey questionnaire. The researcher assured the respondents that all data gathered in this study were treated with the utmost confidentiality.

Upon retrieval of the survey questionnaire, the data gathered was sent to the statistician for tabulation, application of the appropriate statistical tools in every problem, analysis, and presentation of the data in a tabular manner.

**Analysis**

A descriptive-analytical scheme was used to determine the level of difficulty of teachers in Handling Learners at Risk of Dropping Out with mean as the tool, while comparative analytical scheme was used to test the significant difference in the level of capabilities and level of difficulty of teachers in Handling Learners at Risk of Dropping Out when grouped and compared according to the variables, age, grade level, highest educational attainment, average monthly income, plantilla position with Mann-Whitney U test as the tool. Finally, the following rating scale and description was utilized in interpreting the results: 4.50-5.00=Very High Level; 3.50-4.49=High Level; 2.50-3.49=Moderate Level; 1.50-2.49=Low Level; 1.00-1.49=Very Low Level.

**Ethical Consideration**

The researcher ensures that respondents were given the free will to be involved in the study, their identity were not disclosed and they were assured of the confidentiality of the data gathered. After completion, all data stored in electronic gadgets were discarded in order to protect against unauthorized access or use of information.

**Analytical Schemes**

The analysis in this study is based on the stated specific objectives. There are two analytical schemes to be used.

* Objective No. 1 used the descriptive analytical scheme to determine the profile of the respondents according to age, grade level, highest educational attainment, average family income, and plantilla position.
* Objective No. 2 used the descriptive analytical scheme to determine the level of difficulties of teachers in handling learners at Risk of Dropping Out according to motivation in attending the class, learners’ attitude, parental support, and social factors.
* Objective No. 3 used the comparative analytical scheme to determine if there is a significant difference in the level of difficulties of teachers in handling learners at Risk of Dropping Out when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables.

**Statistical Tools**

The following statistical tools were used by the researcher in this study:

* Objective No. 1 used frequency count and percentage to determine the profile of the respondents according to age, grade level, highest educational attainment, average family monthly income, and plantilla position.

According to Veronin (2018), a frequency count is a measure of the number of times that an event occurs. It can be organized in tables, which are helpful in describing the number of occurrences of a particular type of datum within a dataset, while the percentage, Eerde (2014) describes the idea of proportionality where it explains the proportional relationship between two magnitudes or ratios, namely the percentage and its reference.

* Objective No. 2 used the mean to determine the level of difficulties of teachers in the level of difficulties of teachers in handling learners at Risk of Dropping Out in the areas of Motivation in attending the class, Learner's attitude, Parental Support, and Social Factors.

According to Frost (2022), the mean results are obtained by combining all the numbers in a dataset and dividing them based on their total number.

The mean range and interpretation shall be as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Mean Score Range** | **Verbal Interpretation** |
| 4.50-5.00 | Very High Level |
| 3.50-4.49 | High Level |
| 2.50-3.49 | Moderate Level |
| 1.50-2.49 | Low Level |
| 1.00-1.49 | Very Low Level |

* Objective No. 3 used the Mann-Whitney U test to determine if there is a significant difference in the level of difficulties of teachers in handling learners at Risk of Dropping Out when grouped and compared according to the variable age, grade level, highest educational attainment, average family monthly income and plantilla position.

A popular nonparametric test is the Mann-Whitney U test, sometimes called the Mann-Whitney Wilcoxon Test or the Wilcoxon Rank Sum Test, used to compare the difference between two independent samples if the sample is not normally distributed and if the sample size is small (Zach, 2018). All the dependent values are ranked in the test, i.e., the lowest value receives a score of 1, and the total ranks are then used for every group in the test statistic computation (Marshall,2015). The null hypothesis is not accepted if the p-value is less than 5 percent (0.05). If it is higher than the above, the null hypothesis will be accepted (Buthmann, 2017).

**Results and Discussion**

This section presents the results pertaining to the objectives of the study.

**Profile of the Respondents According to the Variables, Age, Highest Educational Attainment, Grade Level, Average Family Monthly Income, and Plantilla Position**

**Table 1.** *Profile of Respondents*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variables** | **Categories** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| **Age** | Younger (less than 41 years) | 68 | 55.30 |
| Older (41 years and above) | 55 | 44.70 |
| **Total** | **123** | **100** |
| **Highest Educational Attainment** | Lower (Bachelor Degree) | 43 | 35.00 |
| Higher (Post Graduate) | 80 | 65.00 |
| **Total** | **123** | **100** |
| **Grade Level** | Lower (Key Stage 1) | 69 | 56.10 |
| Higher (Key Stage 2) | 54 | 43.90 |
| **Total** | **123** | **100** |
| **Average Family Monthly Income** | Lower (below P33,200) | 87 | 70.70 |
| Many (P33,200 and above) | 36 | 29.30 |
| **Total** | **123** | **100** |
| **Plantilla Position** | Lower (Teacher 1 and II) | 72 | 58.5 |
| Higher (Teacher III and Master Teachers) | 51 | 41.5 |
| **Total** | **123** | **100** |

Table 1 summarizes the analysis that aimed to determine the profile of the teachers in terms of age, highest educational attainment, grade level, average monthly income, and plantilla position.

In terms of the age of the respondents, 68 or 55.30% are younger or below 41 years old while 55 or 44.70% belonged to 41 years old and above. For the higher educational attainment, the table shows that 43 or 35% of the respondents belonged to a lower group while 80 or 65% belonged to a higher group. For the Grade level, there are 69 or 56.10% of the respondents are teaching in lower grade level (Key Stage 1) while 54 or 43.90% of the respondents are teaching in higher grade level (Key Stage 2). For the average family monthly income, data shows that 87 or 70.70% have an average family income of less than Php 33,200, while 36 or 29.30% have an average family income of Php 33,200 and above. For the plantilla position, the table shows that 72 or 58.5% of the respondents are classified as Teachers I and II, and 51 or 41.50% are either Teacher III, Master Teacher I, or II.

This implies that the majority of the respondents were younger, with higher level of education and have low average family income, assigned in lower grade level and in lower plantilla position.

**Descriptive Analysis in the Level of Difficulties of Teachers in Handling Learners at Risk of Dropping Out according to the Areas, Motivation in Attending the Class, Learner’s Attitude, Parental/Family Support, and Social Factors**

**Table 2.** *Level of Difficulties of Teachers in Handling Learners at Risk of Dropping Out in the Area Motivation in Attending the Class*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Area** |  | |
| **A. Motivation in Attending the Class** | **Mean** | **Interpretation** |
| *As a teacher, I have difficulties in..* |  |  |
| 1. using a one-size-fits-all method of teaching | 3.13 | Moderate Level |
| 2. utilizing new tools and technologies to keep up with emerging trends | 2.37 | Low Level |
| 3.the subjects or areas that I am teaching | 1.63 | Low Level |
| 4.achieving mastery in every learning competency in a quarter | 3.13 | Moderate Level |
| 5.planning varied activities for diverse learners | 2.70 | Moderate Level |
| 6.managing my time | 4.54 | Very High Level |
| 7.working too many roles at the same time | 3.21 | Moderate Level |
| 8.implementing a set of curriculums for all kinds of students | 2.58 | Moderate Level |
| 9.meeting expectations from my colleagues or superiors | 2.39 | Low Level |
| 10.dealing the pressure of being accountable to learner’s performance | 3.07 | Moderate Level |
| **Overall Mean** | **2.87** | **Moderate Level** |

Table 2 shows the level of difficulties of teachers in handling learners at risk of dropping out in the area on motivation in attending the class with an overall mean score of 2.87 interpreted as moderate level.

Meanwhile, Item number 3 which states “the subjects that I am teaching” registered the lowest mean of 1.63, interpreted as low level while item number 6, “managing my time” obtained the highest mean of 4.54 interpreted as Very High level.

Teachers face difficulties in managing their time when it comes to planning for at-risk students. Teachers are prone to burnout due to long hours of teaching and a heavy workload thus they often struggle with finding appropriate instructional materials suitable for all students in their classes, which hinders their planning process. Without effective time management, teachers may not be able to adequately plan and deliver high-quality instruction. This can result in a learning environment where lessons are rushed or incomplete, adversely affecting the academic progress of at-risk students who may already be struggling. Teachers may find it challenging to provide the necessary differentiated instruction, tailored feedback, and one-on-one sessions that at-risk learners need, which adds to their planning difficulties.

The findings conform with the study of Bulgren (2014) on barriers to teacher planning for at-risk students. The study revealed that teachers are also very concerned about the individualized instruction that considers the developmental stages and learning styles of their students. It is challenging to plan for the entire class when different teachers need different amounts of time to complete the same task. Additionally, they emphasized that students differ in terms of their maturity levels, learning preferences, and learning needs.

**Table 3.** *Level of Difficulties of Teachers in Handling Learners at Risk of Dropping Out in the Area in Learner’s Attitude*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Area** |  | |
| **B. Leaner's Attitude** | **Mean** | **Interpretation** |
| *As a teacher, I have difficulties in..* |  |  |
| 1.remaining calm and positive most of the time | 3.14 | Moderate Level |
| 2.encouraging learners to participate in class discussion | 2.79 | Moderate Level |
| 3.managing disruptive behavior | 3.06 | Moderate Level |
| 4.handling students with diverse behavioral needs (ADHD, autism, etc.) | 4.50 | Very High Level |
| 5.dealing with discrimination, bullying, and other forms of mistreatment | 2.43 | Low Level |
| 6.maintaining classroom rules or expectations | 2.94 | Moderate Level |
| 7.controlling the class | 2.41 | Low Level |
| 8.acknowledging learner’s feelings | 1.96 | Low Level |
| 9.awarding or praising learner’s performance | 1.65 | Low Level |
| 10.monitoring learner’s attendance daily | 1.47 | Very Low Level |
| **Overall Mean** | **2.63** | **Moderate Level** |

Table 3 shows the level of difficulties of teachers in handling learners at risk of dropping out in the area on learner’s attitude with an overall mean score of 2.63 interpreted as moderate level.

Meanwhile, Item number 10, which states “monitoring learner’s attendance daily” registered the lowest mean of 1.47, interpreted as very low level while item number 4, “handling students with diverse behavioral needs (ADHD, autism, etc.)” obtained the highest mean of 4.50 interpreted as Very High level.

This implies that teachers face difficulties in meeting the diverse behavioral needs of at-risk students. Teachers have limited time to address behavioral issues while also covering academic content. This can make it challenging to implement behavior management strategies consistently. Moreover, in an inclusive classroom, it can be more difficult to manage due to the wide range of abilities and behaviors. Teachers must balance the needs of students with disabilities with those of typically developing students, which can lead to increased stress and burn out. In addition, some teachers may have negative attitudes or biases towards inclusive education, either due to lack of experience or belief that it lowers academic standards. Changing these attitudes requires significant effort and ongoing professional development.

The findings conform with the study of Thwala (2015) on the challenges encountered by teachers in managing inclusive classrooms found out that some teachers especially those who never had any experience with children with special needs may find it difficult to adjust their teaching routine and lesson plans from a typical teaching method to a more specialized teaching method to be able to accommodate children with special needs or challenges. Many educators find it challenging to adopt inclusive education. The issues faced by instructors in managing inclusive classrooms were categorized based on the data collected into the following themes: lack of teacher training, lack of competencies, lack of concrete materials, huge classrooms, time management, and assessment.

Similar findings with the study of Quizana & Espiritu(2023) on challenges encountered and coping strategies used by teachers in public elementary schools in the Division of Quezon City revealed that dealing with behavioral problem, communication challenge, lack of parental involvement, lack of materials, and dealing with chronic absenteeism are among the challenges teachers encountered to learners with Autism Spectrum Disorders, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and Dyslexia with special educational needs that are handled by teachers in SPED inclusive education program. They suggested that the common teaching strategies that teachers use when they instructing learners are the following: using visual aids, educational videos, positive reinforcement, simplification of the lesson, consistent routines, peer tutoring, giving clear instructions, giving written handouts, reading materials, repeated instructions, giving multiple examples, using individualized learning instructions, cooperative and experimental learning. Most of the teachers stated that the best coping strategy for dealing with the challenges they faced is having emotional understanding.

**Table 4.** *Level of Difficulties of Teachers in Handling Learners at Risk of Dropping Out in the Area in Parental/Family Support*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Area** |  | |
| **C. Parental Support** | **Mean** | **Interpretation** |
| *As a teacher, I have difficulties in..* |  |  |
| 1.encouraging parents to actively join in school activities | 2.55 | Moderate Level |
| 2.understanding their child’s needs | 3.11 | Moderate Level |
| 3.providing their children resources or assistance they need | 4.50 | Very High Level |
| 4.communicating to parents | 2.33 | Low Level |
| 5.suggesting ways to work with their children on number, reading and writing skills | 3.14 | Moderate Level |
| 6.informing how report card and grades are earned in every class | 2.31 | Low Level |
| 7.offering guidance and support | 2.54 | Moderate Level |
| 8.conducting home visitation | 2.35 | Low Level |
| 9.explaining how their child perform in class | 2.64 | Moderate Level |
| 10.maintaining good relationship to the parents | 1.80 | Low Level |
| **Overall Mean** | **2.73** | **Moderate Level** |

Table 4 shows the level of difficulties of teachers in handling learners at risk of dropping out in the area on Parental Support with an overall mean score of 2.73 interpreted as moderate level.

Meanwhile, Item number 10 “maintaining good relationship to the parents” registered the lowest mean of 1.80, interpreted as low level while item number 3, “providing their children resources or assistance they need” obtained the highest mean of 4.50 interpreted as Very High level.

This implies that teachers find it difficult to provide for the needs of at-risk students, which has implications for their academic success and overall well-being. At-risk students need their families to be involved and supportive, but this is an area where they frequently fall short. Teachers have difficulties in balancing discipline and instruction while providing assistance to students who require extra support because of lack of support or coordination to parents itself. Due to the distinct traits of this population, including violent behavior, a low socioeconomic status, and low self-esteem, teachers who work with at-risk youth need to have specialized training.

The findings conform with the study of Haro & Haro (2022) on teachers' difficulties in developing learning resources. The study revealed that some of the teachers’ difficulties are in parents who lack knowledge in assisting their children and some who do not respond immediately due to unstable internet connection or do not have available gadgets. The lack of budgetary funds, the principle of subsidiarity also imposes a heavy burden on the teachers. They are also in a dilemma in the learning management system that they will adapt to meet the needs of learners and parents and others.

**Table 5.** *Level of Difficulties of Teachers in Handling Learners at Risk of Dropping Out in the Area in Social Factors*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Area** |  | |
| **D. Social Factor** | **Mean** | **Interpretation** |
| *As a teacher, I have difficulties in..* |  |  |
| 1.balancing work and family responsibilities | 2.76 | Moderate Level |
| 2.managing a heavy workload due to limited time and resources | 2.73 | Moderate Level |
| 3.building good relationship to the community | 2.20 | Low Level |
| 4.dealing with stress and anxiety | 3.33 | Moderate Level |
| 5.improving my teaching skills or professional development | 2.25 | Low Level |
| 6.managing my financial resources | 4.56 | Very High Level |
| 7.communicating to my school heads | 1.67 | Low Level |
| 8.putting more effort at work in school | 3.27 | Moderate Level |
| 9.providing resources such as textbooks, technology, and classroom supplies | 3.61 | High Level |
| 10.attending seminars, workshop, and training | 2.43 | Low Level |
| **Overall Mean** | **2.88** | **Moderate Level** |

Table 5 shows the level of difficulties of teachers in handling learners at risk of dropping out in the area on Social Factor with an overall mean score of 2.88 interpreted as moderate level.

Meanwhile, Item number 7, which states “communicating to my school heads” registered the lowest mean of 1.67, interpreted as low level while item number 6, “managing my financial resources” obtained the highest mean of 4.56 interpreted as Very High level.

This implies that teachers driven by a commitment to their students often end up spending their own money to fill the gaps. This can lead to personal financial strain, increasing stress and potentially leading to burnout. When teachers experience financial distress, student performance decreases, with at-risk students experiencing a larger decrease in performance. It reflects that the financial well-being of teachers can directly impact the academic outcomes of their students. At-risk learners often need additional materials and resources, such as tutoring aids, technology, and classroom supplies, to support their learning thus having financial constraints can prevent teachers from acquiring these necessary resources, which can negatively impact the quality of education that at-risk students receive. This lack of resources can further disadvantage these students, making it harder for them to keep up with their peers.

The findings conform with the study of Plaza & Jamito (2021) on financial conditions and challenges among public school teachers found out that debt is still a significant challenge in the financial well-being of public-school teachers in the Philippines. It further revealed that teachers’ financial challenges occurred when their monthly income was not enough for household, school, personal expenses, and unforeseen situations happened, which financial aspect cannot cope with the situation. It was concluded that to ensure quality education for all the learners, giving priority to the well-being of public-school teachers is a prerequisite. Through this, teachers will be helped personally to be more effective professionally.

**Comparative Analysis in the Level of Difficulties of Teachers in Handling Learners at Risk of Dropping Out according to the Areas, Motivation in Attending the Class, Learner’s Attitude, Parental/Family Support, and Social Factors when grouped and compared according to the Variables, Age, Highest Educational Attainment, Grade Level, Average Family Monthly Income, and Plantilla Position**

**Table 6.** *Difference in the Level of Difficulties of Teachers in Handling Learners at Risk of Dropping Out in the Area Motivation in Attending the Class when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variable** | **Category** | **N** | **Mean Rank** | **Mann Whitney U** | **p-value** | ***Sig. level*** | **Interpretation** |
| **Age** | Younger | 68 | 42.13 | 518.500 | 0.000 | 0.05 | Significant |
| Older | 55 | 86.57 |
| **Highest Educational Attainment** | Lower | 43 | 52.51 | 1312.000 | 0.030 | Significant |
| Higher | 80 | 67.10 |
| **Grade Level** | Lower | 69 | 58.67 | 1633.000 | 0.239 | Not Significant |
| Higher | 54 | 66.26 |
| **Average Family Monthly Income** | Lower | 87 | 54.18 | 886.000 | 0.000 | Significant |
| Higher | 36 | 80.89 |
| **Plantilla Position** | Lower | 72 | 52.39 | 1144.000 | 0.000 | Significant |
| Higher | 51 | 75.57 |

Results presented in Table 6 on difference in the level of difficulties of teachers in handling learners at Risk of Dropping Out in the area in motivation in attending the class, revealed significant differences when grouped and compared according to the variables age, highest educational attainment, average family monthly income and plantilla position as the computed p-value of 0.000, 0.030, 0.000 and 0.000 respectively were lower than the level of significance 0.05. Thus, hypothesis stating that there is a significant difference in the level of difficulties of teachers in handling learners at risk of dropping out in the area in motivation in attending the class when grouped and compared according to age, highest educational attainment, average family monthly income and plantilla position is accepted. However, in grade level is not significant. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.

This implies that in the profile variable in age, older teachers encounter difficulties in handling learners at risk of dropping out in motivating themselves in attending the class. Due to their longer tenure in the field, older teachers may be more prone to burnout, which can cause tiredness and a sense of stagnation, making it more difficult for them to find the motivation to teach, and may find difficult to adopt new technologies, which may have an impact on their motivation, particularly if they feel overwhelmed or left behind as compared to younger teachers who are frequently bursting with enthusiasm and energy. Younger teachers are more utilized to integrating technology into their teaching practices, which can make some aspects of their jobs easier to manage and more engaging.

The findings conform with the study of Almazova et al., (2020) on the challenges of the teachers in terms of computer literacy, electronic environment support, academic staff readiness and efficient online education processes found out that even before the pandemic, seasoned teachers distinct challenge when it comes to pedagogy is the integration of information and technology. They find it hard to be accustomed to technology because they are not used to the same strategy. Teachers have a hard time incorporating ICT skills in promoting critical thinking with their learners. Undoubtedly, these factors are vital for the implementation of the learning delivery in the new normal.

In the profile variable in highest educational attainment, higher group (post-graduates) faced challenges in handling learners at risk of dropping out in motivating themselves in attending the class. Post-graduate teachers might hold themselves to a higher standard because of their advanced training than bachelor’s degree teachers. They may experience pressure to perform well in their teaching capacity and to exhibit their mastery of the subject matter in which they have chosen to specialize. This pressure can occasionally result in imposter syndrome or feelings of self-doubt, which makes it difficult for the person to motivate themselves to go to class. In addition to teaching, post-graduate instructors may also be in charge of research, graduate student supervision, or administrative tasks. It can be difficult for them to juggle these obligations with their teaching duties, and it might make them less inclined to show up to class if they feel overburdened or overextended.

The findings conform with the study of Abasolo et al. (2021) on master teacher’s capabilities and challenges in new normal states that because of great expectation from them, found high levels of stress among individuals who have excessive workloads which means long or unpredictable hours, too many responsibilities, and working at a too rapid pace.

In the profile variable in average family income, higher groups, or teachers whose family income is above Php 33,200 teachers have difficulties in motivating themselves in attending the class. High-earning teachers may become complacent due to their comfortable financial situation, and they might feel less pressure to attend class regularly or to invest additional effort in their teaching because they perceive themselves as already successful. This complacency can lead to a lack of motivation to improve their teaching skills or engage with professional development opportunities than lower-earning teachers who may feel more pressure to consistently perform well to secure their financial stability.

The findings conform with the study of Meador (2018) on performance-based pay that creates competition among teachers. The better their students perform, the more money they'll receive. Higher outcomes translate to higher pay. Teachers are often competitive by nature as they are expected to deliver high quality of education to students. In addition, they want their fellow teachers to be successful too, but they also want to be more successful than them.

In the profile variable in plantilla position, higher groups (TIII,MT1&MT2) teachers have difficulties in motivating themselves in attending the class. In addition to their teaching duties, higher-position teachers frequently have important administrative responsibilities such as development of curricula, personnel supervision, financial planning, and policy execution are a few examples. It can be difficult to prioritize attending class when teaching responsibilities and administrative work are competing for their time.

The result of the study showed similar results conducted by Enerio (2020) on challenges of master teachers in one of the public schools in the Philippines found high levels of stress among individuals who have excessive workloads which means long or unpredictable hours, too many responsibilities such as supervising other teachers, work at a too rapid pace are characteristics of a work overload. Master teachers are expected to conduct action research but the study found out that they are not skillful in conducting classroom research.

**Table 7.** *Difference in the Level of Difficulties of Teachers in Handling Learners at Risk of Dropping Out in the Area Learner’s Attitude when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variable** | **Category** | **N** | **Mean Rank** | **Mann Whitney U** | **p-value** | ***Sig. level*** | **Interpretation** |
| **Age** | Younger | 68 | 69.49 | 1360.500 | 0.009 | 0.05 | Significant |
| Older | 55 | 52.74 |
| **Highest Educational Attainment** | Lower | 43 | 84.10 | 769.500 | 0.000 | Significant |
| Higher | 80 | 50.12 |
| **Grade Level** | Lower | 69 | 69.24 | 1363.500 | 0.010 | Significant |
| Higher | 54 | 52.75 |
| **Average Family Monthly Income** | Lower | 87 | 68.63 | 989.000 | 0.001 | Significant |
| Higher | 36 | 45.97 |
| **Plantilla Position** | Lower | 72 | 73.74 | 990.500 | 0.000 | Significant |
| Higher | 51 | 45.42 |

Results presented in Table 7 on difference in the level of difficulties of teachers in handling learners at Risk of Dropping Out in the area in learner’s attitude, revealed significant differences when grouped and compared according to the variables age, highest educational attainment, grade level, average family monthly income and plantilla position as the computed p-value of 0.009, 0.000, 0.010,0.001 and 0.000 respectively were lower than the level of significance 0.05. Thus, hypothesis stating that there is a significant difference in the level of difficulties of teachers in handling learners at Risk of Dropping Out in the area in motivation in attending the class when grouped and compared according to age, highest educational attainment, grade level, average family monthly income and plantilla position is accepted.

This implies that in the profile variable in age, younger group faced difficulties in handling learners at risk of dropping out in managing learner’s attitude. Young or novice teachers may struggle more to establish their authority in the classroom compared to their older counterparts where learners may challenge or test the boundaries set by newer teachers, leading to disruptions and disciplinary issues while doubting their training or experience. Inexperienced educators might not have the tools necessary to deal with students' disruptive behavior or unfavorable attitudes. It might be more difficult for them to carry out interventions or disciplinary actions consistently. This resistance may show itself as disobedience, indifference, or a lack of participation in class activities.

The findings conform with the study of Boakye & Ampiah (2017) on challenges of novice or beginning teachers in Ghana revealed that novice teachers faced problems with time management, lack of resources for teaching and learning, student indiscipline, their students’ inability to understand the lessons taught, lack of students’ interest, and inability of novice teachers to complete their syllabus. They find it difficult to engage in complex and potentially conflict-provoking dialogues with students when dealing with diverse student cohorts.

In the profile variable in highest educational attainment, lower group, (bachelor’s degree) teachers faced difficulties in handling learners at risk of dropping out in learner’s attitude. Bachelor-level teachers may lack the experience or training to effectively navigate the complexities of classroom dynamics. They may struggle to manage diverse learner attitudes and behaviors, leading to disruptions or conflicts that impact the learning environment. They may feel less confident in their ability to provide accurate and comprehensive instruction, leading to difficulties in engaging students and fostering learning.

The findings from the study affirm by Jamaludin & You (2019) on burnout levels of the educators with respect its educational level that bachelor’s degree holders are less-experienced educators and have less responsive to their students than the experienced ones. This might be due to the lack of experience in teaching and handling students, especially their diverse behavior. Thus, it can be deduced that the educators’ lack of teaching efficacy will lead to a deterioration of performance in their career. This phenomenon can be overcome if school authorities and administrators provide professional development programs where they can increase their self-esteem by being teachers.

In the profile variable in grade level, lower group, (Grade 1-3) teachers faced difficulties in handling learners at risk of dropping out in learner’s attitude. Younger students in lower grades typically have shorter attention spans and may struggle to stay focused for extended periods, thus this can make it challenging for lower grade teachers to maintain student engagement and manage learner attitudes effectively. They have difficulties in requiring patience and consistency from establishing clear rules and expectations from the beginning of the school year to help students understand boundaries and behavioral norms.

The findings conform with the study of Patnaik (2023) on challenging of behaviors in primary classrooms of a primary teacher in India showed the presence of challenging behavior in the classroom has a significant impact on teachers and students, creating a stressful and disruptive environment and adversely affecting student–teacher that has led to a stressful classroom environment for teachers.

In the profile variable in average family income or teachers whose family income is below (Php 33,200) faced difficulties in handling learners at risk of dropping out in learner’s attitude. Teachers from low-income families may face challenges in investing in classroom materials, supplies, and resources to support effective teaching. Limited financial means can hinder their ability to create engaging learning environments and provide supplementary materials for students which could result in decreased student engagement and motivation. Teachers with low family incomes may experience significant financial stress due to struggling to make ends meet. This stress can spill over into their professional lives, affecting their ability to focus on teaching and effectively manage learner attitudes.

The findings conform the study of Mabhoyi (2020) on the effect of low salary on teachers’ academic performance in Liberia that teachers' low wages make raising a family on one income nearly difficult, many teachers labor outside the classroom to make ends meet and because of the ongoing fight for money, the greatest instructors have left the profession. It stated also that long hours, little income, and a lack of support and respect to teachers have pushed them down. As a result, not every student will receive their best effort equally, and the students' performance will be harmed.

In the profile variable in plantilla position, lower group, (TI and TII) teachers faced difficulties in handling learners at risk of dropping out in leaner's attitude. Lower-positioned teachers may struggle more to establish authority in the classroom compared to their higher-ranking counterparts. Learners may perceive them as having less influence or expertise, leading to challenges in maintaining discipline and respect. Teachers in lower positions may need more experience or training in effective classroom management techniques. They may struggle to address disruptive behavior or engage students effectively, leading to challenges in managing learner attitudes and creating a positive learning environment.

The findings conform with the study of Kazak, E., & Koyuncu, V. (2021) on undesired student behaviors that the effects of these behaviors and teachers' coping methods found that the undesired behavior of students during the lesson makes it difficult for teachers to continue effective classroom management where most teachers, especially those new to the profession, encounter undesired student behaviors, and the continuity of these behaviors in the classroom environment negatively affects teachers' job satisfaction.

**Table 8.** *Difference in the Level of Difficulties of Teachers in Handling Learners at Risk of Dropping Out in the Area Parental/Family Support when grouped and compared according to the variables above*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variable** | **Category** | **N** | **Mean Rank** | **Mann Whitney U** | **p-value** | ***Sig. level*** | **Interpretation** |
| **Age** | Younger | 68 | 73.95 | 1057.500 | 0.000 | 0.05 | Significant |
| Older | 55 | 47.23 |
| **Highest Educational Attainment** | Lower | 43 | 86.02 | 687.000 | 0.000 | Significant |
| Higher | 80 | 49.09 |
| **Grade Level** | Lower | 69 | 68.08 | 1443.500 | 0.031 | Significant |
| Higher | 54 | 54.23 |
| **Average Family Monthly Income** | Lower | 87 | 69.76 | 891.000 | 0.000 | Significant |
| Higher | 36 | 43.25 |
| **Plantilla Position** | Lower | 72 | 76.11 | 820.000 | 0.000 | Significant |
| Higher | 51 | 42.08 |

Results presented in Table 8 on differences in the level of difficulties of teachers in handling learners at Risk of Dropping Out in the area of motivation in parental support revealed significant differences when grouped and compared according to the variables age, highest educational attainment, grade level, average family monthly income and plantilla position as the computed p-value of 0.000, 0.000, 0.031,0.000 and 0.000 respectively were lower than the level of significance 0.05. Thus, the hypothesis stating that there is a significant difference in the level of difficulty of teachers in handling learners at Risk of Dropping Out in the area in parental support when grouped and compared according to age, highest educational attainment, average family monthly income, and plantilla position is accepted.

This implies that in the profile variable in age, the younger group faces difficulties in handling learners at risk of dropping out of parental support. Younger educators might need more experience in building strong bonds and communicating with parents, especially if they are recent graduates or are still in the early stages of their careers. Parents may be more inclined to question or challenge the authority of younger teachers, especially if they perceive them as inexperienced or less knowledgeable.

The findings conform with the study of Ozmen et al. (2016) on the communication barriers between teachers and parents in primary schools, which revealed that inexperienced teachers encounter almost all kinds of barriers—mainly personal—more than the more experienced ones. These teachers are not able to develop sufficient knowledge and skills in communication; thus it shows that the greatest problems that novice teachers face are related to communication with parents as well.

In the profile variable in highest educational attainment, lower group (bachelor's degree) teachers faced difficulties in handling learners at risk of dropping out in parental support. Compared to more experienced educators, teachers with a bachelor's degree may lack experience in effectively communicating with parents. They might find it challenging to communicate with parents about their children's progress, respond to their worries, or build strong relationships with them. Those with bachelor's degrees teachers might feel less confident in their knowledge and skills, and their inability to hold meaningful conversations with parents regarding the upbringing and education of their children may be affected by this lack of confidence.

The findings conform with the study of Butler et al., (2019)on communicative challenges in the parent-teacher relationship with students who need special help found that teachers and parents often disagree about their ideas of who should be contributing what information and what their respective roles should be in the relationship where lack of communication on the part of parents is the factor that most challenged their interactions especially if teachers are new in the career which they have low confident in their knowledge and skills. They need to be more experts in having meaningful conversations with parents. They did not understand how or why communication was limited but strongly felt they could not meet student needs without this collaborative parent input.

In the profile variable in grade level, lower group (Grade 1-3) teachers faced difficulties in handling learners at risk of dropping out in parental support. Lower-grade teachers need help in assisting parents in understanding the developmental needs of their children. This includes explaining developmental milestones, providing guidance on age-appropriate activities, and suggesting strategies for fostering growth in various domains, such as cognitive, social, and emotional development. Parents in lower grades may experience anxiety and uncertainty about their child's transition to school, as a result, lower grade teachers find it challenging to provide support and reassurance to parents during this transition period, facilitating their involvement in school activities and fostering positive relationships from the outset.

The findings conform with the study of Mazmishvili et al. (2019) that many teachers on the other hand and parents have some difficulties in terms of maintaining smooth and continuous cooperation and partnership in the context of taking care of the children and providing them with the necessary knowledge, competencies, skills, and personal qualities. Parents usually need more pedagogical background to ensure proper guidance based on the appropriate didactic grounding, so teachers must be responsible for coordinating the educational process.

In the profile variable in average family income, lower group, or teachers whose family income is below (Php 33,200) faced difficulties in handling learners at risk of dropping out in parental support. Low-income teachers may need more access to resources for communication with parents, such as smartphones, internet access, or transportation. This can make it challenging to maintain regular contact with parents, share updates on student progress, or coordinate parent-teacher conferences. Teachers with low income may have limited time and flexibility to engage in parental support activities outside of regular school hours because they may work multiple jobs, have additional caregiving responsibilities, or face long commutes, leaving little time for extracurricular involvement or communication with parents.

The findings conform with the study of Maffea (2020) on low-poverty schools in Virginia; students and parents are struggling because of a lack of resources in schools with high rates of less experienced teachers. This results in the teachers getting lower salaries and needing better education to teach students. This means that the school will not have advanced courses, and the students will struggle in classrooms, resulting in negative perception and lack of trust of parents and teachers in providing them the best education for their child.

In the profile variable in plantilla position, the lower group (TI and TII) faced difficulties in handling learners at risk of dropping out in parental support. Low-positioned teachers may perceive that they need more credibility or authority in parents' eyes compared to teachers in higher positions in addressing parental concerns or expectations regarding their child's education. This perception can impact their confidence in engaging with parents and may influence parental trust and cooperation in supporting their child's education, leading to frustration or dissatisfaction. They may face communication barriers with parents due to factors such as language differences, cultural misunderstandings, or limited access to technology that can hinder their ability to effectively communicate with parents and involve them in their child's learning process.

The findings conform with the study of Haisraeli & Fogiel-Bijaoui (2021) on parent-teacher relations challenges, revealing the great tension between the two sides and a plethora of difficulties, including limitations on the time and place available to teachers for communicating with parents, differences in social status and gender, the teachers' clear preference for working with the children, a perception of the teachers' role as one in which pedagogy is in the center, aggression on the part of the parents, and a failure on both sides to coordinate expectations.

**Table 9.** *Difference in the Level of Difficulties of Teachers in Handling Learners at Risk of Dropping Out in the Area Social Factors when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variable** | **Category** | **N** | **Mean Rank** | **Mann Whitney U** | **p-value** | ***Sig. level*** | **Interpretation** |
| **Age** | Younger | 68 | 61.41 | 1830.000 | 0.838 | 0.05 | Significant |
| Older | 55 | 62.73 |
| **Highest Educational Attainment** | Lower | 43 | 65.58 | 1566.000 | 0.411 | Not Significant |
| Higher | 80 | 60.08 |
| **Grade Level** | Lower | 69 | 65.75 | 1604.500 | 0.185 | Not Significant |
| Higher | 54 | 57.21 |
| **Average Family Monthly Income** | Lower | 87 | 63.46 | 1439.000 | 0.478 | Not Significant |
| Higher | 36 | 58.47 |
| **Plantilla Position** | Lower | 72 | 66.73 | 1495.500 | 0.079 | Significant |
| Higher | 51 | 55.32 |

Results presented in Table 9 on differences in the level of difficulties of teachers in handling learners at Risk of Dropping Out in the area in social factors revealed no significant differences when grouped and compared according to the variables highest educational attainment, grade level, and a family monthly income as the computed p-value of 0.411,0.185,0.478 respectively were greater than the level of significance 0.05. Thus, the hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in the level of difficulty of teachers in handling learners at Risk of Dropping Out in the area in social factors when grouped and compared according to highest educational attainment, grade level, and average family monthly income position is rejected. However, there is a significant difference in age and plantilla position with a computed p-value of 0.838 and 0.079, which were lower than the significance level 0. 05. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted.

This implies that in the age profile variable, older groups face difficulties handling learners at risk of dropping out due to social factors. Older teachers may need help adapting to changes in educational practices, technology, and school culture, especially if they have been teaching for a long time. They may resist new methods or approaches, preferring traditional teaching styles or routines. They may have different priorities and commitments outside of work than younger teachers, such as family responsibilities or personal interests. Older teachers may encounter generational differences in attitudes, values, and communication styles among their colleagues and students. They may need to navigate these differences sensitively and adapt their approach to collaboration and teamwork accordingly. Older teachers may be nearing retirement or considering careers.

The findings conform with the study of Gurung (2021) on challenge faced by teachers in online distance learning especially seasoned teachers’ challenges and struggles faced where he identified that lack of technical or software knowledge among teachers was one of the challenges faced by teachers in online distance learning. This implies that teachers had a difficult time in terms of instruction due to their lack of technical skills. This posed a challenge to the seasoned teachers because of their limitations in terms of knowledge in using online strategies, freely expressing themselves, and privacy or personal space.

In the profile variable in plantilla position, lower group, (TI and TII) teachers faced difficulties in handling learners at risk of dropping out in social factor. Lower-positioned teachers may face social stigma or stereotypes based on their position within the school hierarchy. They may be perceived as less competent or less deserving of respect and recognition compared to high-position teachers, which can impact their self-esteem and confidence in their professional abilities. Teachers in lower positioned may experience a lack of professional recognition or validation for their contributions to the school community. They may feel undervalued or overlooked compared to high-position teachers, leading to feelings of frustration or disengagement.

The findings conform with the study of Jones et al., (2013) on socio-emotional challenges of teachers can have a direct influence over the socio-emotional status and development of their students, either in a positive or a negative sense. Socio-emotionally competent teachers have higher levels of self-awareness, know how to manage their emotions, behavior, and relationships and most likely to carry out more effective classroom management have greater impact to their students’ socio-emotional and academic. In contrast, when teachers lack socio-emotional skills, access to training, resources, or techniques to foster the socio-emotional and/or academic development of their students, their behaviors and actions can also produce negative outcomes in their students.

**Conclusions**

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher drew the following conclusions.

Most of the respondents are younger teachers who face many challenges and often need more experience that comes with years of teaching. They may need to develop a repertoire of strategies for managing classroom behavior to meet diverse student needs.

The level of difficulties teachers had in handling learners at risk of dropping out was moderate in all areas: Motivation to attend the class, learner's attitude, parental/family support, and social factors. However, it was highest in Social factors and lowest in learners' attitudes. It means that teachers have financial struggles that prevent students from accessing necessary resources such as textbooks, school supplies, internet for homework, or even basic needs like food and clothing. In the area of motivation in attending class, teachers have difficulties managing their time because of insufficient time to plan activities for at-risk learners. In Learner’s attitude area, teachers have difficulties in handling diverse student behaviors because of limited time to address behavioral issues while also covering academic content. In the Parental or Family Support area, teachers have difficulties providing their children assistance because they struggle to balance discipline and instruction while assisting students who require extra support because of a lack of support or coordination between the parents. In the social factor, teachers need help managing their financial resources, which affects at-risk students, where teachers frequently spend their own money on classroom supplies, learning materials, and even food or clothing for students in need, further straining their finances.

According to highest educational attainment, many teachers are post-graduates, which means that most of the respondents who have master's or doctorate degrees encounter challenges in handling at-risk learners where they may face higher expectations from administrators, colleagues, and parents due to their advanced education resulting to pressure to demonstrate exceptional teaching skills and academic expertise.

According to grade level, the respondents teach in lower grades and face various challenges where they may struggle to manage disruptive behavior, maintain classroom discipline, and create a positive learning environment.

In average family monthly income, most teachers have lower incomes, which they often struggle to make ends meet due to low salaries. They also need help to cover basic living expenses such as housing, transportation, groceries, and healthcare. Lastly, according to the plantilla position, respondents are TI and TII. They face many challenges in handling learners at risk of dropping out, where they have less autonomy in decision-making than more senior colleagues. They may need more control over curriculum, classroom management policies, and instructional practices, which can be frustrating.

It was found that there was a significant difference in the area of Motivation in attending the class, Learner's attitude, Parental/Family Support, and Social factors when grouped according to age, highest educational attainment, grade level, average family income, and plantilla position. This means that teachers face many difficulties in their profession, from heavy workloads and limited resources to diverse student needs and emotional tolls, especially in handling at-risk learners, which may affect their teaching profession, motivation, and student participation in school. Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrate remarkable resilience and dedication in their commitment to educating and empowering the next generation. It is essential to recognize and support teachers in their efforts to overcome these obstacles and create positive learning environments for all students.

**Recommendations**

Based on the researcher's findings, teachers have difficulties in managing their time in handling learners at risk of dropping out who received the highest score in the area of Motivation in attending the class; the following is suggested:

The researcher recommends that school heads organize workshops or orientations on time management, differentiated instruction, and strategies for supporting at-risk learners before the start of the school year to help improve teachers' organizational skills and efficiency. They should have regular formative assessments in each school to monitor student progress, inform instructional planning, and provide training on how to effectively use data to identify at-risk students' needs and adjust teaching strategies accordingly. The school may create a library of teaching resources, including lesson plans, activities, and intervention strategies specifically designed for at-risk learners, to provide a supportive environment that empowers teachers to manage their time more effectively and meet the needs of at-risk learners.

In the area of Learners attitude, the findings showed that teachers have difficulties in handling students with diverse behavioral needs (ADHD, autism, etc.) who are at risk of dropping out; the following is suggested:

The researcher recommends that school heads organize a workshop or orientation for teachers and allocate resources and support to manage and address diverse behavioral needs before the start of the school year. They may seek support from other schools to provide additional behavioral and mental health services for the teachers for specialized support unavailable within the school setting.

The researcher also recommends that the Education Program Supervisor (EPS) specialized in Special Education organize and conduct training sessions for teachers on best practices in special education to better help them understand the curriculum modifications and instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities. They may help the teachers prepare tools to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of special education programs and services, especially for at-risk learners of dropping out.

Another recommendation is for school counselors to help teachers conduct assessments to understand the underlying causes of behavioral issues and provide individual and group counseling sessions to address students' social and emotional needs in collaboration with teachers and parents, especially students at risk of dropping out.

In the area of Parental Support/ Family Support, the findings showed that teachers have difficulties in providing their children with the resources or assistance they need for learners who are at risk of dropping out; the following is suggested:

The researcher recommends that Public Schools District Supervisors provide professional development opportunities to teachers focused on effective resource utilization, classroom management, and instructional strategies for diverse learners, especially students at risk of dropping out. Offer training sessions to help teachers effectively integrate technology into their teaching practices to access digital resources, including educational software, online libraries, and subscription services that can enhance teaching and learning.

The researcher also recommends that parents and other stakeholders establish partnerships with local businesses and organizations to secure donations, grants, and volunteer support for students at risk of dropping out. Working with parent-teacher associations can fundraise and gather resources for classrooms that at-risk students can benefit from.

Lastly, in the area of Social Support, the findings showed that teachers have difficulties in managing their financial resources for learners who are at risk of dropping out; the following is suggested:

The researcher recommends that school heads conduct financial literacy training for teachers about professional development opportunities focused on budgeting and financial management and managing classroom resources efficiently and creatively. In this way, they may help teachers conduct a needs assessment to determine the exact needs of at-risk students, such as school supplies, meals, clothing, extracurricular fees, or technology.

The researcher also recommends to parents and other stakeholders to build community partnerships to collaborate with local organizations and agencies to provide additional resources and support, such as after-school programs for donations or sponsorships for students at risk of dropping out where many companies are willing to support local schools through financial contributions or in-kind donations. Parent-teachers may also collaborate with nonprofit organizations that provide resources for at-risk students, such as food banks, clothing drives, and tutoring services.

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