

Elementary Teachers Lived Experiences in Handling Learners with Behavioral Difficulties

Christine Gay H. Catubig, LPT^a Angel Fe D. Alas, LPT^b, Annabelle C. Danganon, LPT^c,
Wenefredo E. Cagape, EdD PhD^d

^achristinegay.catubig@hcdc.edu.ph, ^bangelfe.alas@hcdc.edu.ph, ^cannabelle.danganon@hcdc.edu.ph, ^dwcagape@ccd.edu.ph,

^a MSM Sped School of Panabo Inc., Panabo City 8105

^b Davao Christian High School, Davao City 8000

^c Kalbay Elementary School, Davao Occidental 8041

^d OIC-College President, City College of Davao City, Davao City 8000

Abstract

Teachers in elementary schools often encounter learners with behavioral difficulties, requiring unique approaches to classroom management and individualized support. This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of five elementary school teachers handling learners with behavioral problems in Digos City, Davao Occidental, Philippines. Using thematic analysis, the study identified common challenges, coping mechanisms, and valuable insights shared by these teachers. The findings highlight the importance of communication, empathy, patience, and collaboration in addressing behavioral difficulties and underscore the need for increased teacher training and support mechanisms.

Keywords: behavioral problems, behavioral difficulties, elementary teachers, challenges, coping mechanisms

1. Introduction

Learners with behavioral problems are a common issue encountered by teachers in elementary school. However, not all teachers are familiar with problem behavior, and training on how to deal with these special learners remains very limited. Some teachers struggle to provide interventions to effectively address the needs of these learners and enhance student outcomes (Chezan et al. 2022). Globally, students with behavioral problems have been found to suffer long-term consequences on academic achievement (Miller, 2024). Johnson et al. (2019) also revealed that the prevalence rates of behavioral problems in elementary schools continue to spike, emphasizing the significance of addressing behavioral challenges in educational settings. Furthermore, learners with behavioral problems were also reported to suffer significant concerns, such as mental health problems, and are linked to cases of bullying.

In the Philippines, some Filipino learners have been reported to experience higher rates of behavioral problems, and the numbers are higher than other Asian subgroups (Flores et al., 2015). Research has also highlighted differences in off-task behavior between Filipino and foreign students, underscoring the need for culturally sensitive interventions tailored to the Philippine educational context (Ogan et al., 2014; Rodrigo et al., 2013).

In Digos City, Davao Occidental, the cases of elementary learners showing signs of behavioral problems have been a rising concern. Though there were educational programs proposing inclusivity in the classroom, some of these learners were not catered to SPED classrooms. Instead, some of them join a mainstream class. With this, these learners continue to

struggle to cope with others, while teachers also find it difficult to address the needs of these learners. The issue of teachers stems from the fact that they had limited knowledge of handling learners with behavioral problems.

Despite several existing literature on teachers handling learners with behavioral problems, there is still an existing research gap on teachers' experiences with learners having behavioral problems. Previous studies include Suparno et al. (2021) which explored behavior problems in children with special educational needs, while Hoogendijk et al. (2019) investigated the impact of an intervention on teachers' relationships with students exhibiting externalizing problem behavior. This study aims to understand how teachers address behavioral challenges in students with diverse learning needs in the Philippine setting and explore the role of teacher-student interactions in managing behavioral issues.

Understanding the challenges faced by elementary school teachers in managing learners with behavioral problems is important as there is also a scarcity of teacher training. Inquiring on this topic can help recognize challenges and effectively address the issue which may positively impact both teachers and students. Furthermore, this study may also bring attention to the local concerns of elementary learners with behavioral problems. The lack of inclusivity in classrooms and intended programs lead to exacerbates the struggle for both learners and teachers. It is therefore very timely for targeted interventions and support mechanisms, particularly in the face of teachers' limited knowledge in handling learners with behavioral problems.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of elementary school teachers in handling learners with behavioral difficulties and to explore the coping mechanisms they use. The study aimed to uncover insights into the challenges faced by these teachers and identify strategies that can enhance their ability to manage classrooms with learners exhibiting behavioral issues.

1.2 Research Questions

This study sought to investigate the experiences of elementary teachers handling learners with behavioral problems. In particular, this study aims to answer the following questions;

1. What are the lived experiences of elementary teachers handling learners with behavioral problems?
2. What are the coping mechanisms of teachers handling learners with behavioral problems?
3. What are the valuable insights that can be shared by teachers handling learners with behavioral problems?

1.3 Related Literature

Prevalence of Learners with Behavioral Problems

Scholars such as Smith (2020) and Johnson et al. (2019) have often noted the noteworthy occurrence of behavioral issues in a variety of educational environments. Their results highlight how widespread these issues are, impacting a

significant percentage of students. The high prevalence rates' constancy highlights the necessity of addressing behavioral disorders at the individual and institutional levels with a comprehensive and systemic approach.

Recent research on the intersectionality of behavioral issues by Carter (2022) and Garcia and Williams (2021) highlights the differences between various student populations. These studies illuminate how behavioral problems interact with socioeconomic status, race, and gender, resulting in differences in prevalence rates and manifestations. Before putting targeted and equitable intervention measures into practice, it is imperative to acknowledge and address these inequities.

Taylor and Lee (2021) highlight the difficulties in correctly recognizing behavioral issues, highlighting how complicated the situation is. According to their research, to guarantee a more precise understanding of the incidence of behavioral difficulties, better screening techniques and teacher training are required. Tailoring treatments to the unique needs of impacted pupils requires addressing identifying issues.

The works of Brown et al. (2023) and Miller (2024) advance our knowledge of the long-term effects of chronic behavioral issues on academic performance. Their research consistently shows a negative relationship between persistent behavioral issues and academic achievement, highlighting the critical need for early intervention to minimize any harmful effects on academic performance. These realizations highlight how crucial it is to combine behavioral and academic support systems.

The global perspective offered by Patel and Kim (2023) enhances the conversation by shedding light on the prevalence of behavioral issues in a range of cultural and educational environments. Their comparative study aids in the development of therapies that are both culturally sensitive and universally relevant by fostering a more nuanced knowledge of the universality and cultural specificity of behavioral issues.

To address problems like burnout, stress, and attrition within the teaching profession, it is crucial to comprehend the experiences of teachers and their coping strategies. Studies have indicated that educators frequently apply coping techniques to deal with stress, including asking friends and family for help, thinking back on their circumstances, and using social coping mechanisms (Mutereko & Chitakunye, 2014; DOTIMAS, 2023). Furthermore, the employment of coping mechanisms in response to stressors has a major impact on teachers' psychological adjustment and general well-being (Stan, 2022).

Additionally, it is imperative to comprehend teachers' real-world experiences, difficulties, and coping strategies when implementing assessment methods and instructional strategies, particularly in trying times like the COVID-19 pandemic ("Lived Experiences of Teachers in Implementing Assessment Methods amid Modular Instruction: Phenomenological Study", 2022; Ghasemi et al., 2022). Research has indicated how important it is for teacher preparation programs to teach educators how to identify stressors and coping mechanisms so they can handle stress well (Baker, 2021; Lutovac & Flores, 2021).

Furthermore, there is a strong correlation between instructors' coping techniques and students' achievement, indicating the connection between teacher well-being and student outcomes (Kuzmin et al., 2021). Through an investigation

of stresses and coping strategies, educational establishments can create customized support systems to help educators efficiently manage obstacles. (Honra, 2022; Pagulong & Bulilawa, 2021).

Experiences of Teachers Handling Learners with Behavioral Problems

Understanding teachers' experiences and coping mechanisms is essential in addressing issues such as burnout, stress, and attrition within the teaching profession. Research has shown that teachers often utilize coping strategies such as seeking support from family and friends, reflecting on their situations, and employing social coping mechanisms to manage stress (Mutereko & Chitakunye, 2014; DOTIMAS, 2023). Additionally, the use of coping responses to stressors significantly influences teachers' psychological adjustment and well-being (Stan, 2022).

Furthermore, the implementation of assessment methods and instructional strategies, especially during challenging times like the COVID-19 pandemic, necessitates an understanding of teachers' first-hand experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms ("Lived Experiences of Teachers in Implementing Assessment Methods amid Modular Instruction: Phenomenological Study", 2022; Ghasemi et al., 2022). Studies have emphasized the significance of recognizing stressors and coping strategies in teacher preparation courses to equip educators with the necessary tools to effectively manage stress (Baker, 2021; Lutovac & Flores, 2021).

Moreover, the success of students is closely tied to the coping strategies employed by teachers, highlighting the interconnectedness between teacher well-being and student outcomes (Kuzmin et al., 2021). By exploring stressors and coping mechanisms, educational institutions can develop tailored support mechanisms to assist teachers in navigating challenges effectively (Honra, 2022; Pagulong & Bulilawa, 2021).

Researchers, including Brown and Garcia (2020) and Lee (2021), emphasize the significant impact of behavioral problems on classroom dynamics. Disruptions to the learning environment, such as interruptions in lessons and difficulties maintaining a focused atmosphere, emerge as common themes. The studies highlight the ripple effects of behavioral challenges, affecting not only the targeted student but also their peers and the overall classroom environment.

Coping Mechanisms Employed by Teachers Handling

Learners with Behavioral Problems

Jones and Williams (2022) identify a range of coping mechanisms, from behavior modification techniques to fostering positive relationships with students. In contrast, Miller et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of professional development in equipping teachers with effective strategies for managing behavioral problems. Furthermore, the relationship between teachers and students is a central theme in the literature. Anderson and Turner (2020) and Carter (2024) delve into how behavioral challenges can strain the teacher-student relationship. Instances of teachers re-evaluating their perceptions of students and the potential impact on long-term relationships emerge, highlighting the complexity of maintaining positive connections in the face of behavioral difficulties.

Moreover, research indicates that teachers who possess better coping and stress management skills are more capable of implementing responsive and appropriate reactions to problem behaviors (Wink et al., 2021). These coping strategies often involve problem-focused approaches, which have been shown to enhance teachers' skills in managing challenging behaviors (Buettner et al., 2016). Additionally, the use of emotional and cognitive coping strategies has been observed among teachers, indicating a multifaceted approach to dealing with behavioral issues (Ayalew et al., 2022).

Furthermore, studies highlight the importance of teacher training and familiarity with interventions tailored to learners with specific needs, such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (Chezan et al., 2022). Effective implementation of problem behavior interventions by teachers has been linked to a reduction in challenging behaviors and an improvement in social-communication skills among learners with ASD (Chezan et al., 2022). Moreover, collaborative efforts and the development of localized support mechanisms have been suggested to aid teachers in addressing the challenges posed by learners with behavioral problems (Honra, 2022).

Teachers' self-efficacy in managing classroom behavior, promoting positive behavior, and decreasing inappropriate behavior are crucial aspects that can be enhanced through effective strategies and interventions (Alban & Alieto, 2022). Strategies such as affective education, problem-solving approaches, and self-management interventions have been identified as beneficial in managing inclusive classroom behavior (Alban & Alieto, 2022). Additionally, the incorporation of motivational strategies and mindfulness-based techniques in classroom management has shown promise in engaging learners and supporting teachers in handling behavioral issues (Sarkar & Kundu, 2021; Zepeda et al., 2020).

Previous Studies on Teachers Handling Learners with Behavioral Problems

Behavioral issues in Philippine schools are a significant concern, Research has indicated differences in off-task behavior between U.S. and Filipino students, with U.S. students exhibiting more off-task behavior compared to Filipino students (Ogan et al., 2014; Rodrigo et al., 2013). Additionally, Filipino youths have higher rates of behavioral problems such as high school drop-out, depression, teen pregnancy, and substance use compared to other Asian subgroups (Flores et al., 2015).

Studies have explored the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on university students in the Philippines, revealing changes in physical activity levels, sedentary behaviors, and health states during the quarantine period (Cruz et al., 2022). Furthermore, the diverse cultural landscape within the Philippines has resulted in significant heterogeneity in behaviors related to diet and activity (Ghimire et al., 2018). Recognizing the significance of family dynamics is crucial in addressing behavioral health needs among Filipino adolescents (Javier et al., 2018). Research has also shown that immigrant children and second-generation immigrants in the Philippines perform better in school and are less likely to engage in problem behaviors compared to their nonimmigrant counterparts (Choi & Lahey, 2006).

In addressing behavioral challenges, it is essential to consider factors such as self-directed learning readiness, academic self-efficacy, and problem-solving abilities among Filipino students (Yao, 2021). Moreover, the restructuring of professional development training for teachers, particularly in subjects like mathematics, can have a transformative impact on student behavior and learning outcomes (Bonghanoy et al., 2019). These

findings underscore the complex nature of behavioral issues in Philippine schools and emphasize the importance of culturally sensitive interventions and support systems to effectively address them.

Peterson and White (2019) and Taylor (2022) highlight the pivotal role of professional development and support systems in helping teachers navigate the complexities of learners with behavioral problems. The literature emphasizes the need for ongoing training, mentorship programs, and collaborative support structures to empower teachers in effectively managing and preventing behavioral issues. The study by (2021) المطيري focused on the experiences of teachers dealing with students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, highlighting the challenges and difficulties faced by teachers. Wink et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of teacher empathy in understanding and responding to students with behavioral issues. Hoogendijk et al. (2019) demonstrated that teachers interact differently with students exhibiting externalizing problem behavior. Additionally, Suparno et al. (2022) highlighted the significance of teacher analysis in effectively managing behavior problems in children with special educational needs. These studies collectively underscore the critical role of teacher-student relationships, empathy, and tailored strategies in addressing behavioral challenges in educational settings.

1.4 Theoretical Lens

This study was gleaned from Thomas and Vaughn's (2019) Inclusive Education Theory, which emphasizes the creation of learning environments that accommodate the diverse needs of all students, fostering a sense of belonging and equity. This theory posits that educational settings should be designed to embrace and support the unique strengths and challenges of learners, promoting an inclusive and accessible atmosphere. For teachers handling learners with behavioral problems, Inclusive Education Theory provides a foundational framework. Inclusion, in this context, extends beyond physical presence to encompass active participation, social integration, and emotional well-being. By embracing the principles of inclusive education, teachers can create environments that facilitate the successful inclusion of learners with behavioral challenges, addressing their diverse needs and promoting positive learning experiences.

However, this is also supported by Tomlinson's (2017) Differentiated Instruction Theory. This theory advocates for tailoring teaching methods, content, and assessments to accommodate diverse learning styles, abilities, and needs within a single classroom. The theory recognizes the individuality of learners and encourages educators to adapt their instructional approaches to meet students where they are. In the context of handling learners with behavioral problems, Differentiated Instruction Theory becomes a valuable framework. It allows teachers to address the varying needs and learning styles of students with behavioral challenges, ensuring that instructional strategies are flexible and responsive to the individual differences among learners.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed qualitative research. Creswell and Creswell (2019) defined qualitative research as an approach that seeks to explore and understand the depth and nuances of human experiences, often employing methods such as interviews, observations, and content analysis. Moreover, this study will also follow phenomenology. Moustakas (2021) described phenomenology as a philosophical and methodological framework focused on understanding and interpreting individuals' lived experiences. Phenomenology delves into the essence of human experiences, aiming to capture the subjective meanings and perspectives individuals ascribe to their encounters.

In this study, the exploration of teachers' experiences in handling learners with behavioral problems necessitates an in-depth understanding of the subjective and lived aspects of these encounters. Phenomenology, with its emphasis on uncovering the essence of experiences, aligns with the study's goal of capturing the complexities, challenges, and coping mechanisms employed by teachers. By adopting a qualitative approach, this study aims to go beyond statistical measures, offering a rich and nuanced exploration of the intricate interplay between teachers and students with behavioral challenges.

2.2 Research Participant

Participants in this study were carefully selected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of elementary teachers dealing with learners exhibiting behavioral problems. The inclusion criteria ensured a diverse yet relevant sample, consisting of five (5) public school elementary teachers from third to fifth-grade levels, each with a minimum of three years of teaching experience. Additionally, participants were required to be residents of Digos City, Davao Occidental, contributing to the localized context of the study. The intentional selection of teachers meeting these criteria aimed to capture a range of perspectives and experiences, ensuring a depth of insight into the specific challenges and coping mechanisms employed by educators in managing behavioral issues. The chosen research participants engaged in individual focus group discussions, allowing for a detailed exploration of their unique encounters and fostering a rich dialogue that adds depth and context to the study.

2.3 Data Analysis

This study involves employing thematic analysis, a well-established qualitative research method, to systematically identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within the collected data. Thematic analysis, as defined by Braun and Clarke (2006), is a flexible and comprehensive approach that allows researchers to explore the rich, context-bound meanings within the data.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step process for thematic analysis guides the systematic examination of the data in this study. The first step involves familiarizing oneself with the data, reviewing transcripts, and gaining an overall understanding of the content. Next, initial codes are generated to highlight interesting features within the data. These codes are then collated into potential themes, forming the third step. The subsequent step involves reviewing and refining these themes, ensuring they accurately represent the data. In the fifth step, the themes are defined and named, creating a coherent narrative that captures the essence of the data. Finally, the analysis is documented, providing a clear and transparent account of the

analytical process. By following these steps, the thematic analysis ensures rigor, consistency, and depth in uncovering the teachers' experiences and coping mechanisms when handling learners with behavioral problems.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are paramount in conducting research, particularly when delving into sensitive topics such as teachers' experiences in managing learners with behavioral problems. The Belmont Report, a seminal document in research ethics, outlines three core principles: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Respect for persons entails recognizing individuals' autonomy and ensuring informed consent. In this study, participants will be fully informed about the research, its purpose, and its potential implications. Voluntary participation and the right to withdraw without consequences will be emphasized, aligning with the principle of respect for persons. Beneficence, the obligation to maximize benefits and minimize harm, will be upheld by prioritizing the well-being of participants. Any potential emotional or psychological distress resulting from discussing challenging experiences will be mitigated through debriefing and support mechanisms. Lastly, the principle of justice mandates fair participant selection and equitable distribution of research burdens and benefits. The study will strive for inclusivity, ensuring diverse voices are heard and that findings contribute to the broader educational community.

3. Results and Discussions

Experiences of Elementary Teachers Handling Learners with Behavioral Problems

Elementary teachers working with learners who exhibit behavioral problems face significant challenges in maintaining classroom order, ensuring effective teaching, and addressing these students' specific needs. Their experiences highlight the critical importance of patience, empathy, and effective communication in managing disruptive behavior while fostering a supportive learning environment. This discussion incorporates insights from relevant literature to contextualize these challenges and strategies.

Addressing the Root Causes of Students' Behavioral Issues

Understanding the underlying reasons for misbehavior is essential for implementing targeted interventions and fostering positive outcomes for students. Research suggests that addressing the root causes of behavioral issues through communication, understanding individual needs, and careful observation is crucial for effective classroom management (Conroy, Sutherland, Snyder, & Marsh, 2008).

Participant 1 underscores the proactive approach of addressing disrespectful behavior by recognizing the issue and engaging in a conversation with the student. This approach aligns with findings that emphasize the importance of direct and respectful communication in addressing student behavior (Jones & Jones, 2015).

"He's different because he's disrespectful, rude, and has a sharp tongue." (P1)

Moreover, Participant 2 highlights the significance of educators being familiar with the history of their learners to better understand individual needs and potential triggers for behavioral issues. This insight is supported by research indicating that knowledge of students' backgrounds and personal circumstances can lead to more tailored and effective behavioral interventions (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

"In addressing students with behavior issues in class, I employ various strategies to create a conducive learning environment and educators must be familiar with the history of their learners, allowing them to better understand individual needs and potential triggers." (P2)

Similarly, Participant 3 emphasizes the importance of observation and engagement in addressing students' behavioral issues. By actively observing the learners, capturing their attention with engaging activities, and allowing time for them to settle during challenging moments, teachers can assess the triggers of misbehavior and respond supportively. This approach is consistent with evidence suggesting that engaging students in meaningful activities and providing them with time to regulate their emotions can be effective strategies for managing behavior (Wehby, Symons, & Shores, 1995).

"I observe the learner, attempt to capture their attention with activities they enjoy, and occasionally allow them some time to settle before resuming the lesson." (P3)

The experiences of elementary teachers handling learners with behavioral problems underscore the necessity of patience, empathy, and strategic communication. By understanding the root causes of behavioral issues and employing tailored interventions, teachers can create supportive learning environments that promote both emotional well-being and academic success. These strategies are well-supported by the literature, highlighting the critical role of teacher-student relationships and individualized approaches in managing classroom behavior effectively.

Utilization of Effective Communication Strategies in Elementary Education

Effective communication strategies are vital for elementary teachers in establishing trust, providing guidance, and fostering positive relationships with their students. Research shows that such strategies can significantly improve student behavior, academic performance, and overall well-being (Epstein et al., 2002; Hamre & Pianta, 2006). Engaging in direct conversations, understanding students' backgrounds, and maintaining continuous communication are key components of these strategies (Dweck, 2006; Wentzel, 2009).

Participant 1 highlights the importance of direct communication with students exhibiting behavioral challenges. *"Naturally, since I'm a teacher, I felt it was my responsibility to talk to him,"* they stated. This approach aligns with findings by Gregory and Ripski (2008), who suggest that teacher-student dialogues can address behavioral issues effectively and build a supportive classroom environment.

Participant 2 emphasizes the need for teachers to employ various strategies, including the use of digital communication tools. They noted, *"In addressing students with behavior issues in class, teachers employ various*

strategies. I managed the situation through continuous communication via messenger." This statement underscores the flexibility and accessibility of modern communication platforms in supporting students outside of traditional classroom settings (Alderman, 2008; Fisher et al., 2011).

Participant 3 further underscores the significance of continuous communication in managing behavioral issues. They remarked, *"Encouraging the student to return to school, I provided advice and support to ensure their ongoing attendance."* This proactive approach is consistent with the literature suggesting that ongoing communication fosters a sense of belonging and engagement among students, which is crucial for their regular attendance and participation (Fredericks et al., 2004; Pianta et al., 2002).

In summary, the utilization of effective communication strategies by elementary teachers is essential in addressing behavioral issues and promoting a positive learning environment. The experiences of the participants illustrate the practical application of these strategies and their alignment with existing educational research.

Creating a Nurturing Learner Environment

Integrating empathy, tailored interventions, and parental involvement enables teachers to cultivate a positive and inclusive learning environment that promotes student well-being and academic success. This approach aligns with educational theories and research findings that highlight the importance of a supportive learning environment in fostering student success.

Empathy plays a crucial role in creating a nurturing learner environment. Participant 4 emphasizes the significance of recognizing and addressing students' situations through understanding and prayer to calm their minds and engage them in the classroom. This approach underscores the importance of empathy, patience, and a supportive attitude toward students with behavioral challenges. Research indicates that empathetic teaching can significantly enhance student engagement and reduce behavioral issues by making students feel understood and valued (Cooper, 2011). By acknowledging and addressing the underlying issues affecting students, educators can create a safe and inclusive space where students feel understood and supported.

"Recognizing and addressing their situation through understanding and prayer can be crucial in calming their minds and involving them in class." (P4)

Moreover, Participant 2 highlights the necessity for educators to employ various strategies to create a conducive learning environment for students with behavior issues. Understanding the history of learners, including their individual needs and potential triggers, is crucial in tailoring teaching methods and interventions to support their academic and emotional growth. By being familiar with students' backgrounds and personal circumstances, teachers can better address behavioral challenges and promote positive interactions within the classroom. This perspective is supported by research suggesting that personalized interventions and culturally responsive teaching practices can significantly improve student behavior and academic outcomes (Gay, 2018).

"In addressing students with behavior issues in class, teachers employ various strategies to create a conducive learning environment..." (P2)

Additionally, Participant 3 explains the importance of involving parents in addressing behavioral problems by maintaining regular communication, informing them of their child's actions, and emphasizing the need for parental follow-up to reinforce positive behavior at home. This collaborative approach between educators and parents is essential in creating a consistent support system for students, ensuring that behavioral expectations are reinforced both at school and in the home environment. Studies have shown that parental involvement is a critical factor in student success, particularly for students with behavioral challenges (Epstein, 2011). By fostering open communication and partnership with parents, teachers can enhance the effectiveness of interventions and promote a holistic approach to addressing students' behavioral issues.

"Stressing the need for parental follow-up and reminders to reinforce positive behavior at home." (P3)

In conclusion, a nurturing learner environment that integrates empathy, tailored interventions, and parental involvement is essential for promoting student well-being and academic success. By understanding and addressing the individual needs of students, employing effective strategies, and collaborating with parents, educators can create a positive and inclusive learning environment that supports all students, particularly those with behavioral challenges.

Coping Mechanisms of Elementary Teachers Handling Learners with Behavioral Problems

Elementary teachers frequently utilize various strategies to navigate the distinct difficulties they encounter. These coping mechanisms assist in effectively managing stress levels and maintaining a balanced classroom while promoting a positive learning environment for all students.

Collaborating with Others

Collaboration, empathy, and patience help teachers navigate challenges and acquire new skills in creating a conducive environment for growth and development. Teachers can help foster a culture of mutual understanding and support that enhances the learning experiences of their students with special needs.

Participant 1 mentioned that sharing feelings and perspectives is crucial in navigating through difficult situations. This indicates the value of open communication and emotional expression in seeking support and understanding from others. By sharing one's emotions and thoughts, individuals can receive empathy, advice, and different perspectives that can help them cope with challenges effectively (Johnson et al., 2010).

"Sharing my feelings and perspectives becomes crucial in navigating through these situations." (P1)

Participant 2 shared the importance of self-care and maintaining a positive mindset in the face of challenges. By taking a moment to breathe and reassuring themselves, individuals can find solace and perspective, helping them navigate

difficult situations with resilience. Cultivating a mindset that views challenges as opportunities for learning and growth can foster a sense of optimism and motivation even in challenging circumstances (Seligman, 2011).

"Understanding their experiences and learning from their advice allows me to acquire and apply new strategies in handling job-related difficulties." (P2)

Furthermore, Participant 3 focuses on the role of patience in creating a safe and supportive environment where individuals feel comfortable expressing themselves and seeking guidance. Patience is essential in building trust, fostering positive relationships, and promoting open communication. By demonstrating patience, educators, mentors, or colleagues can encourage others to share their challenges, seek help when needed, and work towards personal and professional growth in a supportive setting (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

"By being patient, we create an atmosphere where they feel safe to express themselves and seek guidance." (P3)

Cultivating Compassion

As teachers of learners with behavioral problems, recognizing that individuals have varied challenges requires different approaches and interactions. This calls for empathy and patience, allowing learners to cultivate positive relationships, support student success, and contribute to a nurturing and inclusive learning environment.

Participant 2 shared the importance of self-care and maintaining a positive mindset in the face of challenges. By taking a moment to breathe and reassuring oneself, individuals can find solace and perspective, helping them navigate difficult situations with resilience. Cultivating a mindset that views challenges as opportunities for learning and growth can foster a sense of optimism and motivation even in challenging circumstances.

"After a challenging day, I find solace in taking a moment to breathe, reassuring myself that it's not the worst situation." (P2)

Moreover, Participant 1 mentioned the significance of recognizing and respecting the unique challenges that each student faces. By being patient and creating a safe and supportive atmosphere, educators can encourage students to express themselves, seek guidance, and feel valued. This approach fosters trust, empathy, and understanding, creating a conducive environment for students to thrive academically and emotionally (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

"It's essential to recognize that each student comes with their unique set of challenges, and by being patient, we create an atmosphere where they feel safe to express themselves and seek guidance." (P1)

Participant 4 emphasizes the importance of exercising patience and understanding, particularly when interacting with students. By adopting a patient and compassionate approach, educators can build meaningful connections with students, address their individual needs, and support their personal and academic growth effectively. This approach

promotes empathy, active listening, and a supportive learning environment that nurtures students' well-being and development (Rogers, 1961).

"It's crucial to exercise patience and understanding when dealing with our students. Taking a patient and compassionate approach." (P4)

Seeking Support

The value of seeking support, sharing experiences, and building connections with others in times of need is often manifested through engaging in open communication, fostering camaraderie, and creating a supportive environment. As teachers share their emotions and challenges, individuals can strengthen their social bonds, receive valuable support, and navigate through difficult situations with resilience and empathy.

Participant 1 highlighted the significance of sharing feelings and perspectives as a crucial aspect of navigating through difficult situations. By expressing emotions and thoughts, individuals can seek understanding, empathy, and guidance from others. This sharing fosters a sense of connection and support, enabling individuals to cope with challenges more effectively and feel less isolated in their experiences (Schutz & Zembylas, 2009).

"Sharing my feelings and perspectives becomes crucial in navigating through these situations." (P1)

Participant 2 also emphasizes the value of engaging with others' experiences, particularly during moments of disappointment or frustration. By connecting with peers and sharing their experiences, individuals can build camaraderie, create a supportive environment, and engage in meaningful conversations that promote understanding and empathy. This sense of shared experience can strengthen relationships and provide a sense of solidarity during challenging times (Noddings, 2005).

"Engaging with their experiences, whether they be moments of disappointment or frustration, creates a sense of camaraderie that provides an opportunity for meaningful conversation and understanding." (P2)

Participant 5 further explained the importance of sharing emotions and fears with colleagues as an integral part of personal and professional life. By opening up about feelings of being overwhelmed or vulnerable, individuals can seek support, advice, and reassurance from their peers. This act of sharing creates a space for vulnerability, trust, and mutual understanding, fostering a supportive network that helps individuals navigate difficulties and build resilience (Dweck, 2006).

"Sharing my emotions and fears with my colleagues, such as a recent instance where I felt overwhelmed." (P5)

Valuable Insights of Elementary Teachers Handling Learners with Behavioral Problems

Elementary teachers dealing with students who have behavioral issues often strive to identify the root causes of these behaviors. They connect with the child's family history and background to understand the underlying issues and

provide appropriate interventions. This approach aligns with the findings of various studies that emphasize the importance of understanding the child's context to address behavioral challenges effectively (Jones & Jones, 2015; Walker et al., 1995).

Providing Attention and Support to Children with Behavioral Issues

Teachers play a crucial role in fostering positive changes and promoting overall development by prioritizing the needs of students with behavioral issues and creating a supportive and empathetic learning environment. Participant 4 emphasized the importance of giving proper attention to such children, suggesting that active engagement and focus on their needs can create a nurturing environment that promotes positive outcomes.

"In my perspective, the most crucial aspect of dealing with children who have behavioral issues is giving them proper attention" (P4).

Similarly, Participant 2 noted that children with behavioral challenges require support and understanding from their teachers to facilitate positive changes in their behavior. This underscores the role of empathy and compassion in addressing behavioral issues.

"A child facing behavioral challenges needs support and understanding from their teachers to have an opportunity for positive change in their behavior" (P2).

Participant 3 highlighted that supporting these children benefits not only the individual student but also enhances teachers' ability to contribute to their developmental progress. This reciprocal nature of support is crucial in education, where investing in students' well-being leads to improved learning environments and outcomes for all (Wentzel, 1997).

"Supporting the child allows us to offer better contributions to their developmental progress" (P3).

Integrating Spirituality in Teaching

Integrating spirituality into teaching can enhance the educational experience by fostering a deeper understanding of students' needs and empowering teachers with resilience to overcome challenges. Participant 1 suggested that bringing students closer to God can impart knowledge beyond the standard curriculum, implying that incorporating faith can enrich the learning experience.

"Let's bring them closer to God so we can teach them knowledge that goes beyond the DepEd Curriculum" (P1).

Participant 3 echoed this sentiment, noting that turning to God can provide insights into the spiritual aspects of youth, thus promoting a more holistic approach to education.

"By turning to God as a solution, we gain insight into the spiritual aspect of our youth" (P3).

Participant 5 further explained that embracing faith and spirituality helps teachers overcome professional challenges, suggesting that spiritual growth aligns with their teaching practices, offering strength and guidance.

"Through embracing our arguments and advancing spiritually, we can overcome the difficulties encountered in teaching" (P5).

Collaboration and Mutual Support Among Teachers

A school culture rich in support and understanding among educators enhances resilience, refines coping mechanisms, and fosters ongoing growth. Collaboration among teachers not only enhances individual capacities but also creates an environment that benefits students and the broader learning community. Participant 2 emphasized the importance of mutual support and understanding among colleagues, creating a network for sharing experiences, strategies, and resources.

"...foster mutual support and understanding" (P2).

Participant 3 added that sharing personal experiences with colleagues builds camaraderie and facilitates the exchange of coping strategies, strengthening relationships and promoting effective classroom management.

"...builds camaraderie but also provides an opportunity to share coping strategies" (P3).

Participant 4 acknowledged that facing personal challenges is difficult, but collaboration with colleagues fosters growth and confidence among teachers, highlighting the transformative power of collective effort.

"Confronting a challenging personal situation is indeed a trial, but through collaboration, we can grow as teachers and become more confident in ourselves" (P4).

Conclusions

The study concluded that elementary teachers handling learners with behavioral difficulties face a range of challenges, including managing disruptive behavior, maintaining classroom order, and addressing individual needs. The teachers employed various coping mechanisms, such as effective communication, collaboration with colleagues, and cultivating patience and empathy. The study also emphasized the importance of supportive school environments and ongoing teacher training to equip educators with the skills and knowledge to address behavioral difficulties effectively. Furthermore, fostering a culture of collaboration and mutual support among teachers was identified as critical for creating a conducive learning environment. This research calls for additional resources and support for teachers dealing with learners with behavioral difficulties to improve outcomes for both educators and students.

Recommendations

Based on the experiences and insights of elementary teachers handling learners with behavioral problems, several key recommendations emerge. Teachers should prioritize understanding the root causes of behavioral issues through direct, respectful communication by recognizing individual needs and employing tailored interventions. Effective communication strategies, including continuous dialogue and leveraging digital tools, are essential for fostering trust and improving student behavior and academic performance. Additionally, creating a nurturing environment by integrating empathy, culturally responsive practices, and parental involvement is crucial. Teachers should engage parents in reinforcing positive behavior at home, enhancing emotional well-being and academic success. Collaboration and mutual support among educators, sharing experiences, and practicing self-care are vital for building resilience and managing classroom challenges. By actively engaging with students and offering empathy, teachers can foster positive changes, while integrating spirituality can provide additional resilience and a deeper connection to students.

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