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Teacher-Related Factors, Implementation and Effectiveness of School-Based Mental Health Programs in Select Philippine Public Secondary Schools

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the associated factors, extent of implementation, and perceived effectiveness of mental health programs in selected public secondary schools in Congressional District 1, specifically in the municipalities of Camalaniugan and Aparri, for the school year 2023–2024. Utilizing a descriptive-correlational research design, data were gathered from seven secondary schools. Findings revealed that most respondents were females, aged 31–35, married, with a Master's degree and with a 6–10 years of teaching experience. Teachers had attended various mental health-related seminars at multiple levels, from school level to international level. Results indicated that teachers perceived significant associated risk factors affecting program implementation, yet schools were found to be highly implementing and effectively managing mental health programs. Further analysis showed that sex, educational attainment, and number of training sessions significantly influenced teachers' perceptions and implementation practices. Teachers in leadership positions and those with higher academic qualifications demonstrated more positive engagement and program outcomes. A strong positive correlation was found between the extent of implementation and the effectiveness of mental health programs. The study recommends gender-sensitive and standardized mental health training, improved access to resources, and regular program evaluation to sustain effectiveness.

Keywords: Mental Health Programs, Public Secondary Schools, Teacher Perceptions, Educational Attainment, Training, Gender Differences

INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a vital role in supporting the social and intellectual development of children. They provide the necessary resources and environments that foster holistic growth. Their teaching competence significantly contributes to effective learning outcomes, and such competence is closely linked to their mental health and level of preparedness. The World Health Organization (2014) defines mental health as the capacity to manage life's stresses and function productively at work and within the community. Mental health greatly influences work performance and stress levels (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Mental health issues are widespread among individuals, including those in the education sector. In response, Republic Act No. 11036, also known as the Mental Health Act, was enacted to establish a national mental health policy aimed at improving the delivery of integrated mental health services and safeguarding the rights of those utilizing psychosocial health services.

Given the increasing reports of mental health challenges within the education sector—affecting both teachers and students—the Department of Education issued DepEd Order No. 14, s. 2020. This policy, titled Guidance on the Required Health Standards in Basic Education Offices and Schools, emphasizes the provision of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS) to enhance the mental resilience of learners and DepEd personnel. According to mental health professionals, supporting mental health, psychosocial well-being, and academic achievement involves: (1) creating opportunities for building resilience; (2) improving mental health literacy; (3) integrating mental health support during crises; and (4) optimizing learning for children with special needs.

Moreover, the demands of teaching often cause stress, which can undermine teachers' efficiency and effectiveness. Abouserie (1996) pointed out that stress is commonly associated with nearly all occupations. Teachers are expected to manage classrooms effectively and support student learning, while dealing with large class sizes, diverse student needs, and limited resources. These challenges contribute to significant stress levels among educators worldwide (Fontana & Abouserie, 1993; Harney, 2008). Kyriacou (2001) describes teacher stress as the negative emotional experiences—such as frustration and depression—resulting from professional pressures like curriculum adaptation and managing student behavior in large classes. Prolonged stress can lead to burnout and lower job satisfaction (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006). Alarming, such burnout often begins early in teachers' careers, with many reporting high stress while teaching (Fives, Hamman, & Olivarez, 2007).

In addition, Gatchalian (2023) recorded the Fundamental Instruction Mental Wellbeing and Well-Being Advancement Act (Senate Charge No. 379), which looks for to institutionalize the Mental Wellbeing Program. This will give mental wellbeing administrations, enthusiastic, formative, and preventive programs, and other back administrations to guarantee the social and enthusiastic well-being of fundamental instruction learners and educating and non-teaching personnel. The lack of an adequate workforce also hinders the Department of Education (DepEd) from effectively implementing mental health programs in schools. To achieve the ideal ratio of one guidance counselor for every 500 students, a total of 47,879 licensed guidance counselors are needed nationwide. However, there are currently only 4,379 registered

guidance counselors under the Professional Regulation Commission, with just 3,286 actively practicing.

The latest mental health program law in the Philippines is the Mental Health Act of 2018 (Republic Act No. 11036). Signed into law on June 20, 2018, this legislation aims to strengthen the mental health services in the country and improve the overall mental well-being of Filipinos, particularly in schools, communities, and workplaces. This law aims to address mental health concerns comprehensively, ensuring that mental health services are available, accessible, and inclusive, particularly for vulnerable groups such as students, rural populations, and those with limited access to healthcare.

The alarming statistics from the Department of Education (DepEd) in 2021 reveal a concerning mental health crisis among students in the Philippines, specifically in the Cagayan School Division. According to DepEd's data, 404 learners have tragically lost their lives to suicide, while 2,147 others have attempted suicide. These figures highlight the critical need for stronger mental health support systems within schools.

Despite this urgent need, the country's infrastructure to address mental health concerns in educational settings is insufficient. Out of the 60,157 schools across the Philippines, only 16,557 are equipped with dedicated guidance offices, a key resource for addressing students' psychological and emotional well-being. Furthermore, a mere 21,837 schools have implemented mental health awareness programs or events, which are crucial for raising awareness and providing support to those struggling with mental health issues.

The stark gap between the number of schools and those equipped to provide adequate mental health support underlines the urgency for more comprehensive and accessible mental health services in schools. With such a large percentage of schools lacking these essential resources, it is vital for the government and education sector to take action in addressing this growing concern, ensuring that all students have access to the mental health support they need.

For these reasons, the researcher conducted a study on the associated factors, the extent of implementation, and the perceived effectiveness of mental health programs in public secondary schools. The goal is to support educational leaders and school administrators in designing and implementing programs that genuinely assist teachers and enhance instruction.

Specifically, the study aimed to determine the associated factors, the level of implementation, and the perceived effectiveness of mental health programs in public secondary schools for the school year 2023–2024.

To achieve this, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the profile of the teachers in terms of:
 - a. Age
 - b. Sex
 - c. Marital status
 - d. Highest educational attainment
 - e. Plantilla Position
 - f. Years in the service
 - g. Number of Seminars and Trainings related to mental health programs

2. What are the associated risk factors that affect the extent of the implementation of mental health programs as perceived by the teachers?
3. What is the extent implementation of mental health programs in terms of:
 - a. Program Aims and Objectives
 - b. Suitability
 - c. Credibility
 - d. Theory-Informed
 - e. Useability
 - f. Evidence-Base
4. What is the effectiveness of mental health programs as perceived by the teachers when it comes to following:
 - a. Program Aims and Objectives
 - b. Suitability
 - c. Credibility
 - d. Theory-Informed
 - e. Useability
5. Is there a significant difference between the associated risk factors, extent of implementation and level of effectiveness of mental health programs as perceived by the teachers and their profile variables?
6. Is there an association between extent of implementation and level of effectiveness of the mental health program?

Conceptual Framework

School mental health programs primarily aim to promote social and emotional learning (SEL) and foster active, meaningful learning while addressing social, emotional, and behavioral challenges (Browne et al., 2004; Cefai et al., 2018a; O'Reilly et al., 2018; Wore, 2010). These programs have two core objectives: first, to enhance aspects of mental health, particularly by building social-emotional competencies and strengths; and second, to prevent the emergence of emotional, behavioral, and social difficulties. Contributory research, as defined by Mayne (1999), is theoretical in nature and undergoes specific testing to gather evidence on the extent of influence a program has on intended outcomes. This perspective enables an analysis of the commitment behind project implementation, assessing results based on the assumptions of change derived from theoretical frameworks (Dybdal, Bohni Nielsen, & Lemire, 2010; Mayne, 2001, 2012). Schools play a vital role in shaping young people's lives and can significantly influence their mental well-being, often mitigating the adverse effects of other social factors. Positioned at the forefront of mental health promotion, schools are essential in advancing student well-being. For example, initiatives by Cefai and the Scottish Government have established clear definitions and requirements for promoting student mental health. These efforts are echoed globally, as many countries seek to strengthen both education and health systems. Clearly, meaningful progress in school mental health hinges on the development and implementation of targeted intervention programs. Wrist and Murray believe this should focus on social learning and motivation, providing skills for all students and engaging young people, schools and communities. The developers argue that quality is the most important thing, and many variables must be considered: creating programs that meet the needs of students, schools and communities, and creating connections between resources. • Focus on reducing learning barriers through evidence-based planning.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design to investigate the implementation and perceived effectiveness of

mental health programs in public secondary schools within Congressional District 1, specifically in the municipalities of Camalaniugan and Aparri. The descriptive method was applied to gather data on the profile of teachers, including variables such as age, sex, civil status, highest educational attainment, years in service, plantilla position, and the number of mental health-related trainings attended. It also assessed associated factors influencing the extent of implementation and perceived effectiveness of school mental health programs.

The correlational method was employed to determine significant differences and relationships between associated factors, the extent of program implementation, and perceived effectiveness with respect to teachers' profile variables.

The study was conducted in selected public secondary schools in Camalaniugan—namely Northern Camalaniugan National High School, Camalaniugan National High School-Main, and Felipe Tuzon Agricultural School—and in Aparri, including Aparri School of Arts and Trades, Aparri East National High School, Aparri West National High School, and Bukig National Agricultural and Technical School.

The respondents were 100 randomly selected public secondary school teachers from these institutions, with the following distribution: 15 each from Aparri School of Arts and Trades, Aparri East NHS, Aparri West NHS, and Northern Camalaniugan NHS; 20 from Camalaniugan NHS; and 10 each from Felipe Tuzon Agricultural School and Bukig National Agricultural and Technical School.

To collect data, a survey questionnaire adapted from the 2020 Guide to Assessing Mental Health Programs was used. The instrument had four parts: Part I—teacher profile; Part II—associated factors; Part III—extent of implementation; and Part IV—perceived effectiveness. The questionnaire was validated by the research adviser to ensure reliability and content validity before administration.

For the data gathering procedure, the researcher obtained formal approval from the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent and coordinated with school heads to facilitate questionnaire distribution. After collection, data were tallied, tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted.

Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and weighted mean) were used to summarize the data. To test for significant differences, t-tests and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were applied, with all analyses conducted at a 0.05 level of significance using appropriate statistical software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study discusses the profile of the respondents, associated factors, extent of the implementation and the perceived effectiveness of mental health programs among selected Philippine public secondary schools in the 1st congressional district of Cagayan province specifically in Aparri and Camalanuigan towns.

Profile of the Teachers

The demographic profile of the 100 teacher-respondents showed that the majority belonged to the 31–35 age group, accounting for 28% of the total. This was followed by 26% in the 26–30 age group, 23% in the 41–45 age group, 19% in the 36–40 age group, and 4% aged 46 and above. The computed mean age was 36.07 (SD = 6.79), suggesting that the respondents were generally in their

mid-thirties and in the prime of their professional teaching careers. Regarding sex, 52% of the respondents were female, while 48% were male, indicating a slightly female-dominated teaching population. In terms of civil status, 87% were married, while the remaining 13% were single.

In terms of educational attainment, the highest proportion of respondents (49%) held a master's degree, followed by 42% who held a bachelor's degree with master's units, and 9% who had doctoral degrees. This demonstrates that a significant portion of the respondents had advanced educational qualifications, which may influence their capacity to implement and evaluate mental health programs. As for years in service, 28% had 6–10 years of experience, 26% had 1–5 years, 23% had 16–20 years, 19% had 11–15 years, and only 4% had served for over 21 years. This data implies that a large number of teachers are moderately experienced, aligning with the earlier age statistics. Regarding their plantilla positions, 47% were Teacher II, 30% were Teacher III, 11% were Master Teacher I, 8% were Teacher I, and 4% were Master Teacher II. In terms of training and seminars related to mental health programs, all respondents (100%) had attended at least school-level seminars, 91% at the division level, 72% at the district level, 70% at the regional level, and 18% each at the national and international levels, demonstrating strong exposure and participation in professional development related to mental health.

Associated Risk Factors affecting the Implementation of Mental Health Programs

With regard to the associated risk factors affecting the implementation of mental health programs, the most significant issue identified by teachers was the need for active communication and referrals between teachers and mental health professionals, which had a mean rating of 4.5. This finding supports the work of Bradshaw, Hoagwood, and Kelleher (2010), who emphasized the critical role of teacher engagement and collaboration in program success. Conversely, the least significant factor was the belief that schools are not appropriate venues for implementing mental health programs (mean = 2.76). This perception, though still present, has been challenged by scholars like Paternite and Weist (2006), who argue that schools offer an accessible and effective setting for mental health interventions due to their central role in children's daily lives.

Extent of Implementation of Mental Health Programs

In terms of the extent of implementation of mental health programs, the findings revealed very high levels across all dimensions. Under the "Program Aims and Objectives" domain, teachers strongly agreed (mean = 4.64) that the purpose of mental health programs aligns with the vision set forth in the Department of Education's Mental Wellbeing Guide, particularly as outlined in DepEd Order No. 12, s. 2020. In the aspect of "Suitability," teachers also strongly agreed (mean = 4.65) that programs included appropriate evaluations with participation from the target demographic, ensuring that feedback and outcomes could be generalized. This reflects the findings of Cecilia and Martin (2018), who stressed the value of stakeholder engagement in evaluation processes.

The credibility of the mental health programs received strong affirmation as well, with a mean rating of 4.66. Teachers acknowledged that the programs were designed by qualified professionals and institutions, including psychologists and mental health NGOs. Chafouleas and Bray (2007) emphasized that the

legitimacy of program sources plays a vital role in fostering acceptance and successful implementation. For the "Theory-Informed" dimension, the highest mean score of 4.73 was recorded, reflecting strong agreement that the programs utilized evidence-based psychological and behavioral frameworks. This supports the assertion of Weist and Padrón (2003) that theory-driven programs provide structure and enhance program effectiveness.

"Usability" was also highly rated (mean = 4.66), with teachers affirming that programs were easy to access, understand, and integrate into existing school frameworks. These findings are consistent with the views of Paternite and Weist (2006), who highlighted usability as key to practical program delivery. Finally, in the dimension of "Evidence-Based" implementation, the mean rating was 4.62, showing strong agreement that programs were backed by formal evaluations and supported by scientific literature. According to Weist and Padrón (2003), such grounding in empirical evidence increases the likelihood of program success. Altogether, the composite mean for all dimensions was 4.66, indicating that mental health programs are "Very Highly Implemented" in the participating schools. This is consistent with recent legislative efforts, particularly the enactment of Republic Act No. 12080 (Basic Education Mental Health and Well-Being Promotion Act), which institutionalizes school-based mental health services across the country.

Effectiveness of Mental Health Programs

Regarding the **effectiveness** of these programs, as perceived by teachers, the findings were similarly positive. In the domain of "Program Aims and Objectives," a mean score of 4.42 indicated that the objectives of the mental health initiatives were clearly defined and aligned with national goals. Bradshaw and Pas (2013) noted that clearly articulated objectives contribute significantly to positive behavioral and academic outcomes. The dimension of "Suitability" also received favorable responses (mean = 4.31), confirming that programs were tailored to the needs of their intended audience. Gonzalez and Reyes (2019) supported this by stating that programs rooted in cultural and contextual appropriateness tend to be more effective.

For "Credibility," the mean rating was 4.29, indicating that respondents believed the programs were designed and delivered by competent authorities. According to Vogel and Kister (2020), credible programs are more likely to gain trust and engagement from both staff and students. "Theory-Informed" scored 4.31, suggesting that these programs were anchored in psychological frameworks that enhanced their effectiveness. Jorm and Wright (2020) found that well-theorized programs foster better student engagement and outcomes. The "Usability" dimension was rated at 4.40, confirming that ease of use and support resources were key contributors to effective implementation. Finally, in the "Evidence-Based" dimension, a mean of 4.33 reflected teachers' agreement that the programs were based on formal evaluations and best practices. Baker and Mangan (2020) emphasized the importance of evidence-based design in overcoming implementation barriers and ensuring long-term success. The composite mean for all dimensions of effectiveness was 4.35, indicating that mental health programs were perceived as "Effective" by the respondents.

Effectiveness of mental health programs as perceived by the teachers Summary of effectiveness of mental health programs as perceived by the teachers is seen on the data, it is presented that there is an effective implementation of Program Aims and Objectives (4.40); Suitability (4.33) Credibility (4.33); Theory-

Informed (4.33); Useability (4.40); Evidence- Based (4.33). With a Composite mean of 4.35, the findings mean that schools are effectively implementing mental health programs. Public schools are increasingly implementing mental health programs to support students' well-being. A study published in Psychiatric Services found that school-based mental health services (SBMHS) have a positive effect on emotional and behavioral problems among students. Additionally, the Kaiser Family Foundation reported that in the 2021-2022 school year, 96% of public schools offered at least one type of mental health service to their students. These findings indicate that public schools are effectively implementing mental health programs to address students' needs.

Difference between the associated risk factors, extent of implementation and level of effectiveness of mental health programs as perceived by the teachers when grouped according to profile variables

The findings reveal the comparison on the associated risk factors when grouped according to profile. Data reveal with a computed T value= 8.357 and P- value=0.005, teacher-respondents' Sex variable has significant difference as perceived associated risk factors that affect the extent of the implementation of mental health programs. Findings indicate that male and female teachers may have different perceptions toward the mental health programs. Female teachers tend to have more positive attitudes toward mental health education and may be more empathetic and open to discussing mental health issues with students. Male teachers, on the other hand, may feel less comfortable addressing mental health concerns or may not prioritize these issues as strongly. This difference can lead to variability in how mental health programs are implemented in classrooms. With T-value = 8.845 and P-value of 0.000, the findings indicate that Highest educational attainment of Teachers has a significant differ in their perceived associated risk factors that affect the extent of the implementation of mental health programs. The highest educational attainment of teachers is a key factor that influences the extent of the perception on the associated risk factors that affect implementation of mental health programs in schools. Teachers' levels of education can impact their knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward mental health, which in turn affect their ability to effectively engage with and implement mental health programs. Plantilla Position of teachers has significant difference when it comes to the perceived associated risk factors in the implementation of mental health programs as presented with the T-value of 15.398 and P-value of 0.000. This indicates that teachers' positions significantly influence their perceptions of the risk factors that affect the implementation of mental health programs. Teachers in leadership roles tend to view these programs more positively and encounter fewer barriers, while classroom teachers face greater challenges. Addressing the specific needs of teachers based on their roles is crucial for improving the implementation and effectiveness of mental health programs in schools. Table 5a. Comparison on the associated risk factors when grouped according to profile *Significant @0.05 level of significance Comparison on extent of implementation when grouped according to profile Comparison on extent of implementation when grouped according to profile is seen on the table, the findings reveal that Highest educational attainment with a computed T-value= 6.121 and P-value =0.003 Significant; Teachers with higher levels of education (such as a master's or doctoral degree) are generally more knowledgeable about various subjects, including mental health. These teachers may have had exposure to courses or training in psychology, counseling, or

special education, which equips them with a better understanding of mental health issues. Number of seminars/ trainings attended related to mental health programs shows significant difference with a computed T-value of 6.271 and P-value =0.00. the finding indicates that Teachers who engage in ongoing seminars and trainings are more likely to implement effective strategies in their schools (Durlak et al., 2011). These teachers are often better prepared to manage classroom challenges, provide mental health support, and recognize when students need specialized interventions. It can also be inferred that the significant role that attending seminars and training on mental health plays in the successful implementation of mental health programs in schools. Teachers who attended more training were better able to implement mental health programs effectively. To enhance the impact of mental health initiatives, it is crucial for schools to provide teachers with ongoing training, resources, and a supportive school environment. Comparison on the level of effectiveness of mental health programs as perceived by the teachers when grouped according to profile Comparison on the level of effectiveness of mental health programs as perceived by the teachers when grouped according to profile is seen on the table. Evidently presented that Highest educational attainment of teachers has a significant difference, with a computed t-value of 3.331 and p-value=0.040, this indicates that teachers' highest educational attainment plays a significant role in the effectiveness of mental health program implementation. Teachers with higher educational attainment, particularly those with Master's or Doctoral degrees, reported greater success in integrating mental health support into their teaching practices. These teachers likely possess more comprehensive knowledge of mental health issues, are more confident in their ability to implement interventions, and have better access to resources and support networks.

Relationship between extent of implementation and level of effectiveness of the mental health program

The Correlation between extent of implementation and level of effectiveness of the mental health program is seen on the table, it is evident that Extent of implementation & Level of effectiveness of the mental health program are highly significantly related as presented with r-value of 0.715 and p-value of 0.000. The findings indicate that the extent of implementation of mental health programs plays a critical role in determining the level of effectiveness these programs have in improving students' mental well-being. Schools that adopt a comprehensive, well-supported approach to mental health program implementation are more likely to see significant improvements in their students' emotional and psychological health.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that sex, educational attainment, teaching position, and frequency of mental health training significantly influence teachers' perceptions and implementation of mental health programs. Teachers with higher degrees and more training demonstrate greater competence in addressing students' mental health needs. Moreover, a strong correlation exists between the level of program implementation and its effectiveness—schools with well-structured, consistently applied mental health initiatives yield better outcomes. This implies that enhancing teacher qualifications and increasing access to targeted training can strengthen the integration and success of mental health programs, ultimately fostering a more supportive and responsive school environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools and educational authorities should implement gender-sensitive, inclusive mental health training programs that reflect diverse perspectives. Regular, mandatory sessions must be provided, especially for teachers lacking formal or specialized training, with experts and advanced-degree holders facilitating content. Promoting mental health qualifications among educators will strengthen program quality. A standardized, frequently updated curriculum should guide training, supported by allocated resources such as counseling access, instructional materials, and time for integration. Continuous assessment and feedback from teachers and students are essential to ensure program effectiveness, relevance, and lasting impact on school-wide well-being.

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The author hereby states that this article is her original and sole work and that there were no conflicts of interest

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