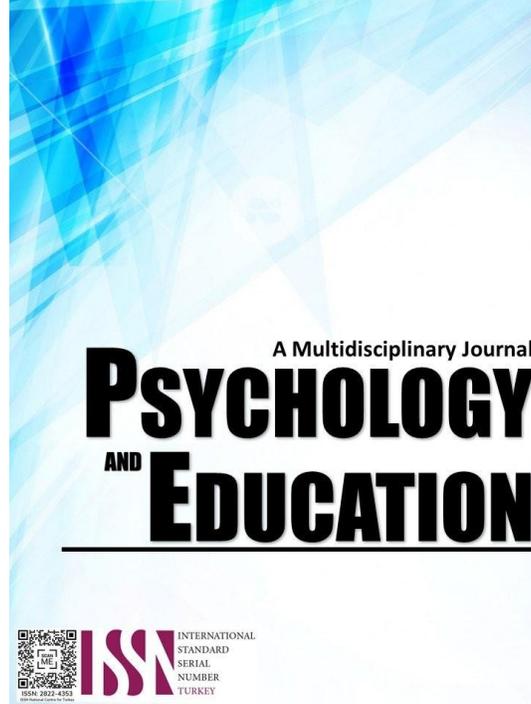


# EMOTION REGULATION STRATEGIES AMONG KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY



**PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL**

Volume: 44

Issue 3

Pages: 342-351

Document ID: 2025PEMJ4261

DOI: 10.70838/pemj.440305

Manuscript Accepted: 06-25-2025

## Emotion Regulation Strategies among Kindergarten Teachers: A Qualitative Inquiry

Julie Ann L. Ladra,\* Grace M. Bugani, Kristine Cyril A. De Los Santos, Narlin P. Digawan,  
Amy K. Merto, Edroslyn J. Fernandez

For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

### Abstract

Teaching in early childhood education, particularly at the kindergarten level, involves not only academic instruction but also the emotional and social shaping of young learners. Kindergarten teachers frequently encounter emotionally charged situations that require patience, empathy, and self-control. In the Philippine context, where classrooms are often diverse and resource-challenged, the emotional demands on teachers are further amplified. Emotion regulation becomes a crucial skill for teachers to manage their own emotional experiences while fostering a safe and supportive environment for learners. Despite the importance of emotional regulation in teaching, limited studies in the local context have explored how early childhood educators perceive and apply these strategies in real classroom settings. Thus, this qualitative phenomenological study explores the emotion regulation strategies employed by kindergarten teachers to manage their emotional experiences within the classroom. Using purposive sampling, ten (10) teacher participants were identified for in-depth interviews. Phenomenological data analysis, specifically Colaizzi's method, was used to analyze the data gathered. The locale of the study was Banaybanay District, Davao Oriental Division, and Mawab District, Davao De Oro Division, Region XI. Findings revealed that teachers prioritize maintaining emotional composure to foster a supportive and respectful learning environment, leveraging social dynamics and institutional support to regulate emotions effectively. The study highlights the critical role of emotional self-awareness and professional relationships in promoting positive classroom interactions and enhancing teaching efficacy. The results highlighted the need for policies and professional development programs that support teachers' emotional well-being, ultimately benefiting educators and students in early childhood education settings.

**Keywords:** *emotion regulation, kindergarten teachers, emotional awareness, social feedback, classroom management, professional support*

### Introduction

Teaching in early childhood education, particularly in kindergarten, involves not only instructional responsibilities but also extensive emotional labor. Kindergarten teachers engage with young learners in the early emotional and behavioral development stages. As such, the classroom becomes a dynamic social environment where teachers must continually regulate their emotional expressions while responding to the needs and behaviors of their students.

For kindergarten teachers, the goals often revolve around creating a nurturing and supportive learning environment, fostering children's socio-emotional growth, and maintaining classroom harmony. In pursuit of these goals, teachers may employ adaptive emotion regulation strategies such as cognitive reappraisal, wherein they constructively reinterpret a potentially stressful or emotionally triggering classroom situation. The study by Byun and Jeon (2023) comparing United States and South Korean preschool teachers' psychological well-being, emotion regulation, and emotional responsiveness found a significant indirect association among well-being, emotion regulation, and responsiveness in both countries. However, significant associations were more prominent among South Korean teachers, and the patterns of indirect associations had substantial cross-country differences. Furthermore, the roles of reappraisal and suppression of emotion regulation were found to be different among early childhood education teachers in SK and the US.

However, in the study of Wang et al. (2023), teachers' emotion regulation has mainly been studied through the lens of emotional labor theory, which states that employees manage their emotions to ensure that they are well aligned with their profession's emotional display rules. As such, teachers are expected to show positive emotions like enjoyment, hide negative emotions like anxiety, and maintain moderate emotion intensity. To meet these expectations, they engage in deep acting, such as proactively modifying internal states or surface acting, such as behaviorally modifying outward emotional displays by hiding felt emotions and masking.

Indeed, in recent years, Frenzel et al. (2021) noted that scholars have recognized the importance of integrating emotional labor with a broader concept of emotion regulation to include a wider range of emotion regulation goals as well as to explore the relationships between diverse emotion regulation strategies and various affective, cognitive, and social factors.

In the Philippine context, the study of emotion regulation among teachers, particularly in early childhood education, remains an emerging area. However, local research has started highlighting the emotional challenges Filipino teachers face. The study of Bernardo et al. (2022) emphasized the emotional demands on Filipino public-school teachers and found that teachers often cope through internal strategies and external support systems. A related study by Torreon et al. (2020) pointed out that Filipino teachers usually adopt an approach that maintains smooth interpersonal relationships, which can influence how emotions are expressed and managed within the school setting.

Moreover, in a qualitative study involving early childhood educators in the Philippines, Guillermo and Roldan (2021) found that teachers use a combination of cognitive reappraisal and situation modification to manage classroom stress. These strategies were often shaped by their desire to uphold a positive classroom image and meet institutional expectations, further emphasizing the role of social goals in emotion regulation. Filipino kindergarten teachers are also influenced by religious and cultural values that promote patience, compassion, self-sacrifice, and factors that may encourage suppressing negative emotions to maintain harmony and care.

Despite the growing body of international literature stressing the importance of emotional regulation in the teaching profession, most studies have primarily focused on Western contexts, with limited attention to early childhood educators in Southeast Asian settings, particularly in the Philippines. Research has shown that teachers' ability to manage emotions significantly impacts classroom climate, student behavior, and teacher well-being. However, Philippine-based studies on emotion regulation remain limited and often generalize findings across educational levels, overlooking the unique emotional demands of kindergarten teaching. Kindergarten teachers in the Philippines navigate a distinct set of cultural expectations, emotional labor, and social interactions shaped by familial involvement, community ties, and institutional norms. Thus, there is a clear gap in localized research that explicitly examines Filipino kindergarten teachers' emotion regulation strategies. These include their contextual applications, influencing factors, and implications. Addressing this gap is crucial for developing culturally relevant support systems and policies that enhance teacher resilience and promote holistic learner development in early education settings.

This study sought to fill this gap by investigating the emotion regulation strategies employed by kindergarten teachers in the Philippine context. Anchored on Gross's Emotion Regulation Theory, this study explored how teachers' goals, the social context of their teaching environments, and individual differences shape their emotion regulation practices. On a broader scale, this study holds potential policy implications. Educational leaders and policymakers can use the study's findings to formulate evidence-based policies and guidelines that support teachers' emotional health as an integral component of professional development and quality education. In doing so, the study contributes to the academic discourse on emotion regulation and the practical goal of enhancing teacher effectiveness and classroom outcomes, especially in the crucial early years of schooling.

This study benefits various stakeholders in education. It can help kindergarten teachers become more aware of their emotion regulation strategies, such as cognitive reappraisal and suppression, leading to improved well-being, stronger student relationships, and a more positive classroom environment. School heads and administrators may use the findings to design programs that support teachers' emotional intelligence, stress management, and mental health.

Teacher education programs can integrate emotion regulation training into their curricula to better prepare future educators for the emotional demands of the profession. The study also has implications for educational policy, encouraging systemic support for teacher well-being. Finally, the research provides a foundation for future studies on emotion regulation, teacher burnout, classroom management, and student outcomes and invites comparative research across educational levels and cultural contexts.

## Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to describe the emotion regulation experienced by kindergarten teachers. Specifically, it answered the following questions:

1. What do kindergarten teachers experience with emotion regulation strategies?
2. What are the goals of regulating emotions as experienced by kindergarten teachers?
3. What is the social context to regulate emotions experienced by kindergarten teachers?
4. What are the individual differences in handling kindergarten learners as experienced by the kindergarten teachers?
5. What are kindergarten teachers' internal and external processes in terms of how emotional awareness and social feedback regulate emotions?

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative research method, using phenomenology grounded in the philosophical tradition of Edmund Husserl, focusing on describing the lived experiences of individuals to understand the essence of a particular phenomenon (Husserl, 1970). In the context of this study, descriptive phenomenology was appropriate because it sought to capture and convey the authentic emotional regulation experiences of kindergarten teachers.

Further, the context is essential to the interpretation of data. According to recent literature, phenomenology remains a valuable and rigorous qualitative method in educational and psychological research, especially for topics involving emotions, identity, and interpersonal relationships (Sundler et al., 2021; Neubauer et al., 2021). In a phenomenological research activity, the researchers used interviews to interact and validate the participants' responses and answers to the research questions.

### Respondents

In this descriptive phenomenological study, 10 kindergarten teachers were selected as participants through purposive sampling. It

targeted five (5) Kindergarten Teachers from Banaybanay District, Davao Oriental Division, and another five (5) Kindergarten Teachers from Mawab District, Davao De Oro Division, with at least five (5) years of teaching experience. It is also guided by the criterion that they had relevant and substantial experience in early childhood teaching, particularly in managing classroom emotions. The selection was informed by the principle of data saturation, which occurs when no new information or themes are observed in the data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The inclusion criteria in selecting participants for this study was at least five (5) years of teaching experience.

Limiting the sample to 10 participants was based on established qualitative research guidelines and recent empirical evidence. According to Guest et al. (2020), data saturation in homogeneous participant groups, such as educators within the same teaching level. This can often be achieved with as few as 6 to 12 interviews, primarily when the research question is focused, and the participants share similar roles and contexts. In this study, participants were selected from identical school environments and teaching assignments, which allowed for rich, in-depth exploration of a shared phenomenon on emotion regulation in kindergarten classrooms.

### **Procedure**

This study followed strict ethical standards in conducting research with human participants. Prior to the collection of any data, ethical clearance was obtained from the institutional research ethics committee of the affiliated academic institution. This approval ensured that all procedures adhered to established ethical guidelines, particularly those concerning informed consent, confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of participation.

Upon receiving ethical clearance, the researchers employed purposive sampling to identify ten (10) kindergarten teachers from Banaybanay District in the Division of Davao Oriental and Mawab District in the Division of Davao de Oro, both located in Region XI. These participants were selected based on their teaching experience and their willingness to share insights on their use of emotion regulation strategies in the classroom. Each participant received a detailed informed consent form explaining the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Data collection commenced only after obtaining signed informed consent from all participants.

The primary method of data collection involved semi-structured interviews guided by a research-validated Interview Guide. As noted by Creswell (2013), semi-structured interviews are frequently used in qualitative research because they provide a flexible yet focused framework for exploring participants lived experiences. This format allowed the researchers to explore specific topics while remaining open to new ideas and themes emerging from the dialogue.

Interviews were conducted individually, and each lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes. With participants' permission, interviews were audio-recorded to ensure the accurate capture of responses. In addition to audio recordings, the researchers took detailed field notes to document non-verbal cues, contextual details, and preliminary interpretations.

After data collection, all interviews were transcribed verbatim. To enhance the credibility of the findings, the researchers employed member checking. Participants were given the opportunity to review their transcripts to verify the accuracy of their responses and to clarify or amend any information as needed. This process helped ensure the trustworthiness and authenticity of the data.

The analysis of data was conducted using Colaizzi's (1978) phenomenological method. This involved a systematic process of reading and rereading transcripts to extract significant statements, formulating meanings, organizing these meanings into thematic clusters, and developing a comprehensive narrative that captured the essence of participants' experiences with emotion regulation in the kindergarten classroom.

Through this rigorous and ethically grounded data collection procedure, the study ensured that the voices of kindergarten teachers were documented accurately and analyzed meaningfully, providing valuable insights into the emotional dynamics of early childhood teaching.

### **Data Analysis**

This study used Collaizzi's (1978) phenomenological data analysis to analyze the data gathered. The following steps were adhered to: (1) each transcript will be read and re-read to obtain a general idea about the whole content; (2) for each transcript, significant statements that pertain to the kindergarten teachers' emotional regulations strategies, these statements will be recorded on a separate sheet noting their pages and lines numbers; (3) meanings will be formulated from these significant statements; (4) the formulated meanings will be sorted into categories, clusters of themes, and themes; (5) the findings of the study will be integrated into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon under study; (6) the fundamental structure of the phenomenon will be described; and finally, (7) validation of the findings will be sought from the research participants to compare the researchers' descriptive results with their experiences (Shosha, 2012).

### **Ethical Considerations**

Following the ethical principles outlined by Patton (2002), this study acknowledged the importance of building trust, ensuring transparency, and protecting the rights and welfare of all participants. Because this qualitative study involves personal reflections on emotional experiences, several ethical considerations were strictly observed.

First, the purpose of the study was clearly explained to all potential participants. They were informed that the study aimed to explore how kindergarten teachers manage and regulate their emotions in the context of their professional roles. Participants knew how their insights may help inform future teacher training programs and support systems in early childhood education. Participation in this study was completely voluntary. Teachers may choose to participate or decline without any pressure or negative consequences. Furthermore, they may withdraw from the study without providing a reason.

In line with ethical standards on reciprocity and risk, the study took every precaution to minimize emotional discomfort that may arise from recalling stressful experiences. While the survey posed minimal risk, participants were informed in advance that they could skip any questions they did not feel comfortable answering. The researchers expressed gratitude for the participants' time and valuable insights to promote mutual respect and recognition.

Confidentiality was also strictly maintained throughout the research process. Participants' names and identifying information will be replaced with pseudonyms, and all collected data will be securely stored. Only the researchers and their academic adviser have access to the raw data. Before data collection, written informed consent was obtained through a Consent Form outlining the study's purpose, procedures, and the participant's rights. The study employed member checking to ensure accuracy and honor the participants' voices. Participants were allowed to review and verify the accuracy of their interview transcripts and clarify or correct any information as needed. Following these ethical guidelines, the study aimed to foster a respectful, safe, and honest space for kindergarten teachers to share their experiences and contribute meaningfully to educational research.

## Results and Discussion

In this section, the results of the data analysis are presented, along with a detailed discussion of the identified themes. Direct references to the teachers' responses from the interviews are included to provide a more precise understanding. Participants in this interview stand for KT as Kindergarten Teacher, and L stands for Lines.

Figure 1 shows the emerging themes and subthemes on emotion regulation strategies among Kindergarten Teachers.

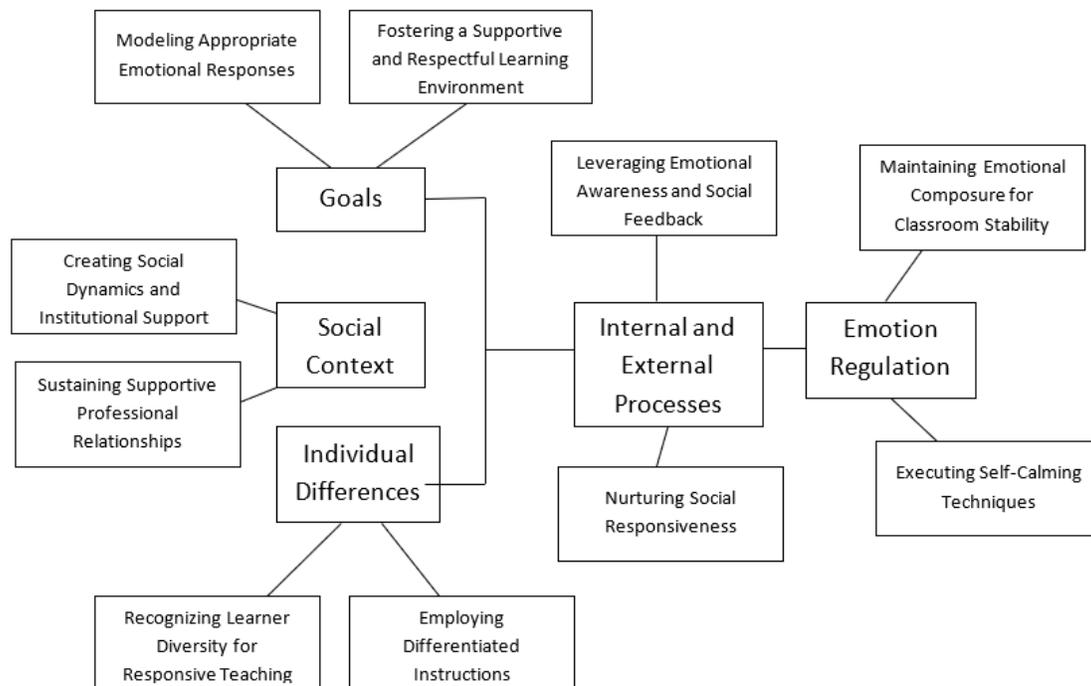


Figure 1. *Emotion Regulation Strategies among Kindergarten Teachers*

### *Goals to Regulate Emotions as Experienced by the Kindergarten Teachers*

Kindergarten teachers in the study recognized that regulating their emotions serves specific goals in promoting effective classroom interactions. Two dominant themes emerged from the data: Modeling Appropriate Emotional Responses and Fostering a Supportive and Respectful Learning Environment.

#### *Modeling Appropriate Emotional Responses*

Participants emphasized that their ability to remain calm, composed, and positive—even in stressful situations—was critical in teaching children how to manage their emotions. Teachers perceived themselves as emotional role models, noting that their behavior directly influenced the emotional tone and behavior of the class. The Kindergarten teacher shared;

"It is essential for kindergarten teachers to know how to manage their emotions because young children are very sensitive. They might misunderstand the teacher's actions, which could make them not want to go to school or cause them to feel afraid of their teacher." KT 2, Lines 39-42

"Yes, because regulating my emotions helps build a positive relationship with the children, which results in good behavior inside the classroom." KT 5, Line 29

Recent literature supports this perspective. A study by Morris et al. (2022) noted that children's emotional competencies are significantly influenced by the modelled behaviors of adults in their environment. When teachers demonstrate healthy emotional regulation, children are more likely to develop resilience and better self-regulation skills. Similarly, Poulou (2020) emphasized that teacher emotional competence can predict student behavior and classroom climate, underscoring the importance of teachers modelling appropriate emotional responses.

These findings demonstrate that teachers do not regulate their emotions simply for personal benefit but as a pedagogical tool to promote emotional growth and classroom harmony. Gross's Emotion Regulation Theory (1998) provides a clear framework: teachers employ regulation strategies for broader emotional and social goals.

### ***Fostering a Supportive and Respectful Learning Environment***

Another goal expressed by teachers was to create an emotionally safe and respectful space where students feel valued and understood. Regulating their emotions helped teachers maintain patience, fairness, and warmth, especially when dealing with behavioral challenges or emotionally vulnerable students. As the teachers shared,

"It is essential for kindergarten teachers to know how to manage their emotions because young children are very sensitive." KT 2, Lines 39-42

"What I hope to achieve is that they will better understand our lesson and not be afraid to ask me questions during the activity." KT 6, Line 23

"Yes, because regulating my emotions creates a positive relationship with the children, which results in good behavior inside the classroom." KT 5, Line 29

"Yes! Staying emotionally balanced helped me to express my feelings clearly and respectfully and allowed me to listen actively to the point of view of my colleagues." KT 1, Lines 77-78

Recent research echoes these findings. Jennings and Greenberg (2020) highlighted that emotionally supportive classrooms, where teachers regulate their emotional responses, correlate with increased student engagement, fewer behavioral problems, and improved academic outcomes. Spilt et al. (2020) also found that emotionally competent teachers are more likely to form secure relationships with students, further supporting fostering a respectful and inclusive learning environment.

This goal reflects the importance of emotional climate in early childhood education. According to Gross's Process Model of Emotion Regulation (1998), effective regulation involves modifying emotional responses to align with desired outcomes. In this case, they regulate their emotional expressions to create a conducive learning environment, reinforcing prosocial behavior and trust among learners.

### ***Social Context to Regulate Emotions as Experienced by the Kindergarten Teachers***

The emotional landscape of teaching is not shaped solely by internal processes; it is deeply embedded in the social context in which teachers interact with students, colleagues, and the broader school community. From the interview data, two themes emerged that capture the kindergarten teachers' perceptions of the social context for regulating emotions: Creating Social Dynamics and Institutional Support and Sustaining Supportive Professional Relationships.

#### ***Creating Social Dynamics and Institutional Support***

In the social context of the kindergarten classroom, teachers consistently described the importance of a supportive and structured environment in shaping how they regulate their emotions. Emotion regulation was not seen as an isolated, internal process but as deeply intertwined with their social roles and professional responsibilities. They emphasized that managing their emotions effectively requires a conscious response to the immediate environment, particularly when navigating student behaviour challenges or stressful classroom moments. This sense of emotional control is closely tied to their interactions with young learners, where teachers must often serve as role models, demonstrating calmness, patience, and resilience to help children learn appropriate emotional responses.

"You regulate your emotions when you get angry. Because at the end of the day, the child will still come to you, say sorry, and even hug you — yet you are still upset." KT 4, Lines 75-79

"Interacting with the children influences how I regulate my emotions because it allows me to talk with them and better understand why they behave that way." KT 6, Lines 33-34

"I make sure to be friendly and respectful. Then, I also build a boundary so that my student's parents will not become too dependent or overly flattering." KT 10, Lines 79-80

"Hmm... yes, I feel that pressure. You have a role where you are supposed always to be happy because if you show frustration or sadness, others might misinterpret it. Of course, as teachers, we are expected to be emotionally strong. Ahhh... it is part of the job, but at the same time, it is sometimes hard not to show what you feel." KT 4, Lines 94-97

The study by Zinsser et al. (2021) explored how early childhood teachers' emotional supportiveness influences children's social-emotional development. It found that teachers who effectively regulate their emotions contribute to a stable classroom atmosphere, positively affecting student outcomes.

Thus, Gross's Emotion Regulation Theory provides a framework for understanding how individuals manage their emotional experiences and expressions. In the context of teaching, both antecedent- and response-focused strategies are employed. The social and institutional contexts influence the selection and effectiveness of these strategies, underscoring the importance of supportive environments for optimal emotional regulation.

### ***Sustaining Supportive Professional Relationships***

Participants consistently acknowledged the influence of school policies, leadership practices, and institutional expectations on their emotional regulation. Teachers noted that clear rules, positive leadership, and consistent administrative support fostered a secure and trusting environment where emotions could be expressed and managed constructively.

"School policies or leadership styles significantly influence my emotional behavior or reactions. When the policies are clear, consistent, and supportive of teachers and students, it helps us carry out our tasks more effectively." KT 1, Lines 119-122

"The policies from the Department of Education come from higher authorities, like the principal, who determines how to manage the teachers and what leadership style to use. Everyone around the principal should be supportive." KT 4, L 98-99

Recent studies reinforce this view. The findings of Hargreaves (2020) found that supportive leadership in early childhood settings correlates strongly with teachers' emotional resilience and job satisfaction. Moreover, Rusu and Colomeischi (2023) emphasize that institutional clarity and organizational support predict lower emotional exhaustion and enhance teachers' use of healthy emotional strategies.

Similarly, a study by Reyes and Apostol (2023) explored the mediating role of teamwork skills in the relationship between transformational leadership of school heads and self-regulation among public school teachers in Davao Oriental. The results revealed that transformational leadership positively influenced teachers' self-regulation, with teamwork skills partially mediating this relationship. This underscores the importance of supportive leadership in fostering emotional regulation among teachers.

### ***Individual Differences in Handling Kindergarten Learners as Experienced by the Kindergarten Teachers***

Kindergarten teachers often encounter various classroom behaviors, emotional expressions, and learning styles. The responses gathered from this study highlighted how educators perceive and adapt to the diverse needs of their learners, emphasizing the emotional labor and regulation required to respond effectively. Two central themes emerged from the analysis: Recognizing Learner Diversity for Responsive Teaching and Employing Differentiated Instruction.

#### ***Recognizing Learner Diversity for Responsive Teaching***

Teachers in the study consistently expressed the importance of understanding each learner's background, personality, and emotional tendencies. Teachers noted that each child enters the classroom with unique developmental and emotional profiles shaped by their home environment, social experiences, and individual temperament.

Teachers reported that by identifying and acknowledging these differences early on, they were better able to respond calmly and thoughtfully, especially when faced with challenging behaviors or emotional outbursts. Here are some of the answers of the participants;

"Yes, some types of student behavior are quite challenging to handle. In my experience, some of the challenges I face are children who frequently have tantrums or cannot control their emotions and those who are very shy and unwilling to participate in class. So, I try to give them much understanding and observe what major factors might be causing their behavior, then give them time to calm down." KT 3, Lines 116-120

"It helps a lot because instead of getting angry at a particular child, you understand why they behave that way since there is a reason behind it. That is why we need to understand this." KT 6, Lines 72-73

A recent study by Hoffmann et al. (2023) highlighted that teachers who engaged in reflective practices about their learners' emotional and developmental diversity were better at maintaining emotional balance and providing supportive feedback. Additionally, Jiang and Wang (2021) found that teachers' recognition of student individuality was positively correlated with more adaptive emotion regulation strategies and classroom climate.

Teachers emphasized that emotional sensitivity, especially in the early years, must be met with equal emotional intelligence from the teacher. Responding with empathy and patience was essential in creating an inclusive and emotionally safe environment. This recognition also helped prevent teachers from reacting impulsively or with frustration, which aligns with Gross's Emotion Regulation Theory (1998, updated 2014), particularly the situation modification and attentional deployment strategies. Teachers could constructively redirect their emotional responses by re-evaluating the context and focusing on the learner's emotional needs.

### ***Employing Differentiated Instruction***

Alongside recognizing diversity, participants also shared classroom management strategies that included students with different learning styles and emotional needs. Teachers described the implementation of differentiated instruction, varying tasks, communication styles, and emotional approaches depending on the needs and responsiveness of individual students.

"Yes, because not all strategies are suitable or appropriate for every child. Some strategies are effective for certain children, while others are not. So, the strategy should be fitting and appropriate." KT 5, Line 55-56

"It is difficult, but it can be managed, so I always provide differentiated instruction to cater to the needs of all the children." KT 9, Lines 130-131

The study of Zinsser et al. (2022) emphasized the connection between emotion regulation and instructional decision-making, stating that teachers who practiced differentiated instruction were more capable of regulating negative emotions like frustration or stress. Similarly, Pakarinen et al. (2020) found that differentiated strategies improved student-teacher relationships and reduced emotional exhaustion among educators.

This practice aligns with the response modulation strategy in Emotion Regulation Theory, which involves adjusting one's behavior and emotional display to align with a desired outcome. It also requires emotional flexibility, a crucial component of teacher emotional resilience.

### ***Internal and External Process of the Kindergarten Teachers on How Emotional Awareness and Social Feedback Regulate Emotions***

The participants in this study highlighted the critical roles that both emotional awareness and social feedback play in managing emotions in the kindergarten classroom setting. Their responses revealed two interrelated themes: Leveraging Emotional Awareness and Social Feedback and Nurturing Social Responsiveness.

#### ***Leveraging Emotional Awareness and Social Feedback***

Participants emphasized that recognizing their emotions early and being attuned to social cues from students, colleagues, and parents helped them manage their emotional responses effectively. Teachers shared that when they are emotionally self-aware, they are more capable of choosing calm and constructive ways to respond to challenging situations. They also noted that receiving positive or supportive feedback from others, such as encouragement from co-teachers or acknowledgment from parents, served as emotional reinforcement, validating their efforts and boosting their emotional stamina.

"Yes, it needs to be addressed early on so you become aware of your emotions and whether they are right for everyone's happiness. If you recognize your emotions early, you can change your attitude and shift your emotions to positive ones. When things are positive, everyone becomes happy, and everything runs smoothly." KT 9, Lines 150-152

"The help from others gives me the strength to stay calm in any situation I face, and it helps me understand my daily work more easily." KT 6, Lines 82-83

"Emotional self-awareness is an essential aspect of being an effective kindergarten teacher. When I am aware of my feelings, I can better control my reactions, especially in stressful situations. It also helps me reflect on what triggers my emotions and how to respond in a way that supports my well-being and my students' needs." KT 2, Lines 186-191

"Professional relationships play a significant role in helping me manage my emotions. Support from colleagues and others creates a sense of trust that makes it easier to share concerns, ask for advice, and feel understood during difficult times." KT 1, Lines 203-206

These findings align with recent literature. For example, Brackett et al. (2021) argue that emotional awareness—understanding one's feelings and their impact—is a foundational skill for emotional intelligence that supports positive teacher-student interactions and reduces burnout.

Furthermore, Kim and Acton (2020) observed that teachers who perceive emotional feedback from peers and supervisors as supportive are more likely to report higher job satisfaction and better classroom management.

Gross's Emotion Regulation Theory (1998, updated in Gross, 2015) supports this perspective by emphasizing that effective emotion regulation depends on recognizing internal cues (emotional awareness) and modulating emotional responses in context. In the case of kindergarten teachers, this involves interpreting social feedback from their environment and adapting their emotional expressions accordingly to maintain classroom harmony and model positive behavior.

### *Nurturing Social Responsiveness*

Teachers also shared that being emotionally responsive to others, including students and colleagues, creates a culture of empathy, understanding, and collaboration. They believed their ability to respond appropriately to students' emotional needs contributed to a safe and supportive learning environment. Teachers noted that when they demonstrate emotional openness and receptiveness, students mirror the same behaviors, leading to more respectful interactions and reduced behavioral issues.

"Feeling emotionally understood by others helps me to stay emotionally balanced at work. When others truly listen to and understand what I am going through, it helps lessen my stress." KT 1, Lines 189-191

"When others understand how I feel, it helps because that is when I truly feel their support. I do not have to hide my emotions anymore, and it becomes easier for me to manage them. Because of that, I can work properly and feel happier in my job." KT 3, Lines 154-158

"After I finish my class, if I am stressed, I usually express how I feel to my colleagues. Like saying, "I am so tired." I do not want to keep all that frustration inside, feeling heavy in my chest because of the exhaustion from teaching the kids — like thinking, "Teaching is tiring." I want to share it with them because they understand. At least you get to release the emotions weighing on your heart." KT 7, Lines 484-489

This theme is supported by the work of Jennings et al. (2019), who stress that teachers who cultivate emotional responsiveness contribute to emotionally supportive classrooms that enhance children's socio-emotional development. Moreover, research by Rivers et al. (2020) suggests that social feedback loops, where emotions are expressed, interpreted, and responded to within a group, reinforce emotion regulation strategies and emotional norms.

Again, Gross's model contextualizes these findings well: the modulation of expressive behavior (response modulation) and the influence of interpersonal cues on emotion regulation are central to understanding how social environments shape emotional expression. In kindergarten settings, these social cues often come from young learners' reactions, peer collaboration, and the overall emotional climate of the classroom.

### *Emotion Regulation Strategies as Experienced by the Kindergarten Teachers*

In the emotionally dynamic environment of a kindergarten classroom, teachers are often faced with situations that challenge their ability to remain composed and responsive. The study explored how kindergarten teachers perceive and implement emotion regulation strategies during their day-to-day teaching experiences. Two prominent themes emerged from the participants' responses: Maintaining Emotional Composure for Classroom Stability and Executing Self-Calming Techniques. These themes reflect the deliberate and thoughtful ways teachers manage their emotions to create a safe, engaging, and productive learning atmosphere for young children.

#### *Maintaining Emotional Composure for Classroom Stability*

On this theme, it highlighted the teachers' awareness that their emotional states significantly affect the classroom climate. Teachers expressed that projecting calmness and positivity even during stressful or challenging moments helps maintain order and ensures children feel secure. Several participants noted that children are susceptible to adult emotions; thus, teachers consciously manage their reactions to avoid transferring negative energy to the learners.

"During challenging moments, I try to stay calm first. Hmm... I usually take a deep breath and remind myself that there are just kids; they are still learning how to behave." KT 3, Lines 16-23

"There are various strategies to regulate emotions, such as being cheerful in front of the children and staying energetic so they will not feel tired or lose interest in listening to the lesson." KT 6, Line 4

The strategies employed by kindergarten teachers to regulate their emotions align with recent research emphasizing the importance of emotional competence in educational settings. For instance, a study by Wimmer et al. (2000) highlights that teachers who engage in mindfulness-based interventions exhibit improved emotion regulation and mood, leading to enhanced classroom environments.

Furthermore, a 2025 phenomenological study by Botea et al. in the Philippines investigated the challenges and adaptations of kindergarten teachers in the "new normal" brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. The study found that teachers faced unprecedented disruptions and had to develop coping mechanisms to manage stress and maintain effective teaching. These coping strategies included self-calming techniques and emotional regulation to handle education's increased demands and emotional challenges during a pandemic.

The findings can be interpreted through Gross's (1998) Process Model of Emotion Regulation, which outlines strategies for situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change, and response modulation.

#### *Executing Self-Calming Techniques*

The second theme focused on teachers' specific strategies to regulate their emotions in real-time. Standard practices included taking deep breaths, briefly stepping outside the classroom to reset, using internal self-talk, or engaging in positive distractions such as singing or storytelling. These techniques were seen not only as a way to manage stress but also as proactive steps to preserve their mental well-

being and sustain their teaching effectiveness. Teachers emphasized that being emotionally prepared allowed them to respond constructively to misbehavior, maintain patience, and uphold a nurturing atmosphere. Here are extracted responses from the interviewees:

"Ah, like when you are teaching, and they start fighting, especially when they do not listen even after being told to stop, that is it." KT 7, Lines 23-24

"Like, take a deep breath and relax for a moment. Just like that. Alternatively, take a deep breath, sit down, and look at them." KT 6, Line 9

The self-calming technique, where teachers regulate their emotions in real time, is supported by research from Kurki et al. (2019) and Silkenbeumer et al. (2021). These studies suggest that teachers who model calm and constructive emotional responses can effectively teach children emotion regulation strategies.

Again, the findings can be interpreted through Gross's (1998) Process Model of Emotion Regulation. Teachers' self-calming techniques, like deep breathing and positive self-talk, exemplify response modulation strategies to influence emotional responses.

## Conclusions

This study highlights the central role of emotion regulation in the professional practice of kindergarten teachers and its profound influence on classroom climate and student development. Through in-depth qualitative inquiry, the findings revealed that teachers actively draw on both intuitive and intentional strategies to manage emotional demands, guided by personal disposition, learner behavior, and institutional support. These strategies, ranging from emotional self-awareness to self-calming techniques were found to be crucial in fostering respectful classroom interactions, supporting student well-being, and sustaining teaching efficacy. Consistent with the study's objectives, the results affirm that emotion regulation is not only an individual competency but also a relational and contextual practice shaped by leadership, school policies, and collegial relationships. As such, it is recommended that educational policy and leadership support emotionally responsive teaching through clear institutional frameworks, mentorship, and peer collaboration. Teacher education programs should embed emotion regulation training, such as mindfulness, reflective practices, and empathy-based communication, into both pre-service and in-service development. In classroom application, teachers are encouraged to model emotionally composed behavior, tailor responses to diverse learner needs, and engage constructively with feedback from the school community. Ultimately, recognizing and supporting the emotional labor of kindergarten teachers is essential in creating nurturing educational environments where both teachers and young learners can thrive. Future studies may expand this inquiry by incorporating varied educational settings, longitudinal perspectives, and mixed-method approaches to further strengthen the understanding of emotion regulation in early childhood education.

The findings of this study emphasized several avenues for future research and practical application to advance the understanding and support of emotion regulation among kindergarten teachers.

Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to explore how teachers' emotion regulation strategies develop over time and influence their well-being and student outcomes. Expanding studies to include educators from different levels—such as elementary, secondary, and special education, can offer broader insights into emotional regulation across diverse teaching contexts. Using mixed-methods approaches that combine quantitative data with qualitative perspectives will provide a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' emotional experiences. Involving stakeholders like students, parents, administrators, and support staff can also help identify social and institutional factors affecting emotion regulation and promote collaborative solutions to support teacher well-being. From a policy and practice standpoint, educational leaders should integrate emotion regulation into teacher training and professional development programs. Structured training in emotional competence and school-level strategies that promote empathy, supportive communication, and collaboration are crucial. Building a school culture rooted in emotional support can strengthen teacher resilience and improve learning environments. Additionally, engaging families and communities in supporting teachers' emotional health through open communication and shared responsibility further enhances teacher well-being and student success. These recommendations highlight the need for ongoing research and deliberate action to address the emotional aspects of teaching, which are essential to improving educational outcomes and supporting the holistic well-being of educators and learners.

## References

- Bernardo, A. B. I., Estrellado, A. F., & Gochuico, A. I. C. (2022). The emotional challenges of Filipino teachers: Coping strategies and implications for teacher development. *Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 31(1), 67–78.
- Botea T.; Navaro, L. Manit K. (2025). Challenges and Adaptations of Kindergarten Teachers in the New Normal: A Phenomenological Perspective February 2025. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies* 51(2):136-155 DOI:10.9734/ajess/2025/v51i21773
- Byun, S., & Jeon, L. (2023). Preschool teachers' psychological wellbeing, emotion regulation, and emotional responsiveness: A US-Korea comparison. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1152557.
- Frenzel, A. C., Daniels, L., & Burić, I. (2021). Teacher emotions in the classroom and their implications for students. *Educational*



Psychologist, 56(4), 250–264. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2021.1985501>

Gross, J. J. (1998). The emerging field of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Review of General Psychology*, 2(3), 271–299.

Gross, J. J. (2001). Emotion regulation in adulthood: Timing is everything. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 10(6), 214–219.

Guillermo, M. E., & Roldan, A. T. (2021). Emotional labor and regulation strategies among early childhood educators in Metro Manila. *Philippine Journal of Education*, 94(1), 45–62.

Neubauer, B. E., Witkop, C. T., & Varpio, L. (2019). How phenomenology can help us learn from the experiences of others. *Perspectives on Medical Education*, 8(2), 90–97. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40037-019-0509-2>

Reyes, J., and Apostol R. (2024). Transformational Leadership of School Heads and Self-Regulation: The Mediating Role of Teamwork Skills in Public Schools

Torreon, K. P., Candelario, C., & Delos Santos, C. (2020). Pakikisama in the workplace: Understanding Filipino teachers' workplace behavior. *Philippine Social Science Journal*, 3(1), 22–31.

Sundler, A. J., Lindberg, E., Nilsson, C., & Palmér, L. (2019). Qualitative thematic analysis based on descriptive phenomenology. *Nurse Education in Practice*, 45, 102848. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2019.102848>

Wang, H., Burić, I., Chang, M., (2023). Teachers' emotion regulation and related environmental, personal, instructional, and well-being factors: A meta-analysis. Published online: 12 July 2023 © The Author(s) 2023. [https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11218-023-09810-1?utm\\_source](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11218-023-09810-1?utm_source)

#### **Affiliations and Corresponding Information**

**Julie Ann L. Ladra**

Piso Camp Elementary School  
Department of Education – Philippines

**Grace M. Bugani**

Little Professors Learning Center – Philippines

**Kristine Cyril A. De Los Santos**

Hadji Aton Bangal Elementary School  
Department of Education – Philippines

**Narlin P. Digawan**

Mawab Central Elementary School  
Department of Education – Philippines

**Amy K. Merto**

Looc Pt.Linao Elementary School  
Department of Education – Philippines

**Edroslyn J. Fernandez**

Holy Cross of Davao College – Philippines