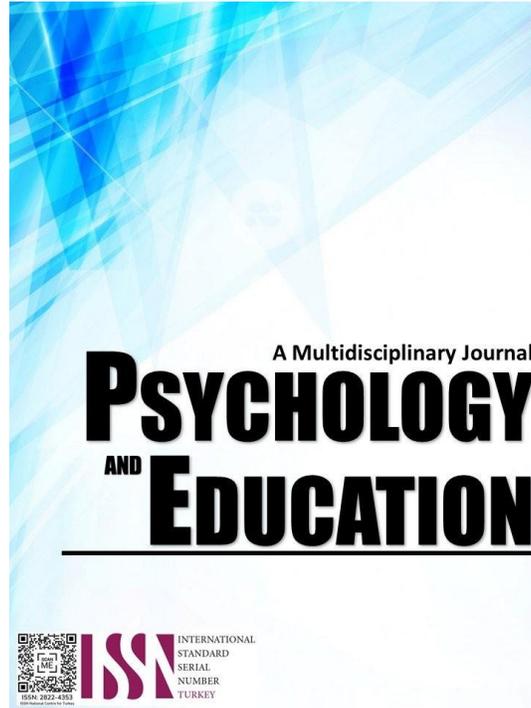


DIVERSE CLASSROOMS: CHALLENGES AND COPING PRACTICES OF MULTIGRADE TEACHERS



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Diverse Classrooms: Challenges and Coping Practices of Multigrade Teachers

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the challenges encountered and coping practices of multigrade teachers in selected districts of the Division of Lanao del Norte for the school year 2024–2025. Multigrade teaching, typically implemented in rural and resource-limited contexts, presents various intrinsic and extrinsic difficulties, including increased workload, time constraints, curriculum alignment issues, and lack of instructional materials. Using a descriptive-correlational research design, the study involved 42 multigrade teachers. Data were collected through validated questionnaires and analyzed using weighted mean, correlation, and regression analysis. Findings revealed that correlation analyses using Spearman's rho indicated no significant relationship between teachers' coping practices (both intrinsic and extrinsic) and the challenges they encountered. Likewise, multiple regression analysis showed that demographic variables (e.g., age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, plantilla position, number of trainings) and types of challenges (intrinsic and extrinsic) did not significantly predict either intrinsic or extrinsic coping mechanisms. The findings imply that factors beyond individual demographics and perceived challenges such as school leadership, institutional support, and professional culture may play a more substantial role in shaping coping strategies. This aligns with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes the importance of environmental and social influences in behavioral adaptation. The study recommends strengthening school-based support systems and peer collaboration networks to enhance the well-being and effectiveness of multigrade teachers.

Keywords: *challenges encountered, coping practices, multigrade teachers, instructional strategies*

Introduction

Multigrade teaching is widely practiced in rural and remote areas worldwide, particularly in developing countries where limited resources, low student enrolment, and teacher shortages necessitate the combination of multiple grade levels in a single classroom. In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) has institutionalized multigrade education as a strategy to provide equitable learning opportunities, especially in geographically isolated and disadvantaged schools (DepEd Order No. 81, s. 2009). Despite its importance, multigrade teaching presents numerous challenges, particularly in the implementation of instructional strategies that cater to diverse learning needs within a single classroom setting.

DepEd Order No. 81, s. 2009, titled "Strengthening the Implementation of the Multigrade Education Program in Philippine Education," highlights the government's commitment to supporting multigrade schools by providing adequate resources, teacher training, and innovative instructional strategies. However, multigrade teachers continue to face significant challenges in classroom management, curriculum integration, differentiated instruction, and student assessment. Understanding these challenges and identifying the coping practices employed by teachers is crucial in enhancing the effectiveness of multigrade instruction.

The challenges multigrade teachers face can be categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic difficulties. Intrinsically, teachers struggle with stress, burnout, and professional isolation due to the lack of peer support within small schools. They often experience a sense of role overload—having to serve as curriculum designers, behavior managers, and facilitators all at once. On the extrinsic level, issues such as insufficient teaching aids, limited access to in-service training, inadequate classroom space, and minimal administrative support compound the difficulty of implementing effective teaching strategies. Moreover, the absence of a clear policy on learning assessments for multigrade classes makes it difficult to measure and monitor student progress effectively.

Despite these obstacles, multigrade teachers demonstrate remarkable resilience through various coping mechanisms. Intrinsic coping strategies include the development of personal routines, self-reflection, maintaining a positive mindset, and drawing motivation from student success. Teachers often cultivate a strong sense of purpose, believing that their service in disadvantaged areas is vital to community development. Some develop personalized teaching aids or modify existing materials to suit their classroom context, while others use journaling and reflection to continually improve their teaching practices.

On the other hand, extrinsic coping mechanisms are just as essential. These include seeking guidance from school heads and coordinators, collaborating with fellow teachers through Teacher Learning Action Cells (LAC), attending professional development seminars, and leveraging available technologies such as educational videos and mobile apps to support instruction.

Existing studies affirm that multigrade teaching presents inherent complexities, but teachers actively develop coping strategies to meet these demands. Given these realities, there is a pressing need to closely examine the coping strategies multigrade teachers adopt and evaluate their effectiveness. By doing so, educational leaders and policymakers can develop more responsive interventions and support systems tailored to multigrade contexts. Moreover, understanding the lived experiences of these educators can inform the design of pre-service training programs and ongoing professional development that better prepare teachers for multigrade assignments.

This study aimed to explore the challenges encountered and coping practices of multigrade teachers in the Division of Lanao del Norte. Specifically, it sought to identify the instructional strategies commonly used, examined the difficulties teachers faced in their implementation, and analyzed the coping mechanisms that supported effective teaching and learning in multigrade settings.

To further contextualize the relevance of this study, based on first-hand experience, it is important to acknowledge the specific challenges multigrade teachers in Lanao del Norte face on a daily basis. These include managing classrooms with diverse age groups and learning levels, dealing with the scarcity of localized multigrade instructional materials, limited access to technology, and minimal opportunities for relevant and continuous professional development. Geographic isolation further exacerbates these challenges, leaving many teachers without immediate access to peer collaboration or supervisory support. Teachers often report feeling overwhelmed due to the simultaneous preparation for multiple curricula, lack of time for individualized instruction, and the need to continuously motivate learners with varying academic needs and attention spans.

The output of this study, which was an action plan on empowering multigrade teachers through an enhanced coping strategies program offers practical and sustainable solutions to these persistent challenges. By integrating targeted training sessions, promoting peer support mechanisms, improving access to teaching resources, engaging the wider community, and advocating for supportive policies, the program directly addresses both intrinsic and extrinsic burdens faced by multigrade teachers.

Research Questions

This study aimed to investigate the challenges encountered and coping practices of multigrade teachers in selected districts of the Division of Lanao del Norte for the school year 2024-2025. It also sought to determine the relationship between the challenges faced and the coping mechanisms employed by these teachers, with the goal of formulating an action plan to support multigrade educators. Specifically, the study aimed to:

1. Describe the demographic profile of multigrade teachers in terms of:
 - 1.1 age;
 - 1.2 sex;
 - 1.3 civil status;
 - 1.4 highest educational attainment;
 - 1.5 plantilla position; and
 - 1.6 number of trainings attended?
2. Identify the challenges encountered by multigrade teachers in their teaching practices in terms of:
 - 2.1 intrinsic challenges; and
 - 2.2 extrinsic challenges?
3. Determine the coping strategies employed by multigrade teachers to address these challenges in terms of:
 - 3.1 intrinsic coping mechanisms (e.g., adaptive planning, stress management, individual instructional adjustments); and
 - 3.2 extrinsic coping mechanisms (e.g., collaboration, professional development, administrative and community support)?
4. Analyze the relationship between the challenges encountered and the coping practices used by multigrade teachers.
5. Examine the predictive influence (regression analysis) of demographic factors and challenges on the coping practices of multigrade teachers.
6. Develop an action plan based on the findings to enhance support for multigrade teachers.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational quantitative research design to examine the instructional strategies employed by multigrade teachers at some districts in the Division of Lanao del Norte and their effectiveness in enhancing student learning outcomes. The descriptive aspect of the study aimed to identify and describe the instructional strategies used, while the correlational approach determined relationships between the instructional strategies and perceived student performance. Quantitative data were collected through surveys and structured assessments, allowing for statistical analysis to derive meaningful conclusions.

Respondents

The respondents of the study were forty-two (42) purposively selected multigrade teachers from three (3) different districts in Lanao del Norte Division. These teachers were selected because they were assigned to multigrade schools. Their firsthand knowledge and practical experience in handling learners from different grade levels within a single classroom made them valuable sources of information. The selected respondents were expected to offer their perspectives on the strategies they find effective, the challenges they face, and their perceptions regarding the impact of these strategies on student learning outcomes in a multigrade setting.

Instrument

To gather the necessary data, a structured survey questionnaire was adapted, consisting of three key sections: the demographic profile

of the respondents, the challenges they experience in multigrade teaching, and their coping mechanisms. In addition, a Teacher Self-Assessment Checklist was used to evaluate their instructional methods, ensuring alignment with best practices in multigrade teaching. Student performance records, including test scores and academic outcomes, were collected to analyze the impact of instructional strategies.

The data gathering procedures for this study was conducted systematically to ensure the collection of comprehensive and relevant information regarding the instructional strategies employed by multigrade teachers at Paiton Elementary School.

The initial step in the data gathering process was to secure permission from the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS) of Lanao del Norte. A formal letter of request was prepared and sent to the SDS, clearly outlining the study's objectives, significance, and the scope of the data collection activities. This letter also detailed the ethical considerations in place to protect the confidentiality and rights of the participants.

Recruiting the ten multigrade teachers who participated in the study is the next step after granting permission. Information about the study was communicated to potential participants, emphasizing the importance of their contributions and assuring them of their voluntary participation. Written consent was obtained from each teacher, ensuring they understand their role in the research and the confidentiality of their responses.

Prior to data collection, the research instruments were prepared and tested for clarity and relevance. This stage includes finalizing the semi-structured questionnaire. A pilot test was conducted with a small group of educators to refine the questions and ensure they effectively capture the desired information.

Once all data had been collected, it was organized and stored securely to ensure confidentiality. Quantitative data from surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize the responses. To enhance the credibility of the findings, member checking will be employed. This process involves sharing preliminary findings with participants to ensure accuracy and allow for clarification or additional insights. The final step was the compilation and analysis of the data systematically, leading to the preparation of the research report. This report summarizes the findings, draws conclusions based on the data collected, and offers recommendations for practice and future research.

Data Analysis

The data gathered were analyzed and interpreted on the following statistical tools using Social Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Objective 1, Frequency and Percentage were used to describe the demographic profile of multigrade teachers.

For objectives 2 and 3, the Weighted Mean was utilized to identify the challenges encountered by multigrade teachers in their teaching practices and the coping strategies employed to address these challenges.

Objective 4, Spearman's rho Correlation was employed to analyze the relationship between the challenges encountered and the coping practices used by multigrade teachers.

For objective 5, Linear Regression was used to examine the predictive influence of demographic factors and challenges on the coping practices of multigrade teachers.

Ethical Considerations

Research protocols or standards of behavior were strictly adhered to in this study. It ensured that the office of the Schools Division Superintendent obtained approval to carry out the research. The dignity and well-being of the teacher respondents were protected at all times. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents; their informed consent was also obtained before the study commencement, and the respondents may opt to withdraw from the study at any time. The respondents were given the option to indicate or not to indicate their names in the questionnaire. The respondents were assured of the utmost confidentiality of their responses and identity. The participation of respondents was voluntary, with no guaranteed benefits involved. The respondents were assured of feedback upon request after the study was completed, as this aimed at securing cooperation from them toward the study's main objectives.

The study's goal is to enhance multigrade teaching practices, contributing valuable insights that could improve instructional strategies and student engagement in Lanao del Norte. The researcher balanced the benefits and any potential risks, minimizing discomfort for participants. Ensuring equity, transparency, and inclusivity, the study will involve a diverse teacher group and maintain clear communication about the research's goals and outcomes. Additionally, the researcher's qualifications and adequate facilities supported ethical, effective data collection. Collaboration with local stakeholders ensured the study aligned with community needs, fostering support for its findings.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the data gathered to answer the study's problems. It also analyzes and interprets the data collected by the researchers to solve the issues in the study. The presentation, interpretation, and analysis were supported by tables and arranged in the

same manner as the questions presented in the statement of the problem in Chapter 1.

Demographic profile of multigrade teachers in terms of age, sex, civil status, highest educational attainment, plantilla position and number of trainings attended?

Table 1. *Age*

<i>Age</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
20 – 30 years old	11	26.2
31 – 40 years old	26	61.9
41 – 50 years old	5	11.9
Total	42	100.0

Table 1 presents the age distribution of multigrade teachers. The majority of the respondents (61.9%) fall within the 31–40 years old age range, followed by those aged 20–30 years old (26.2%), and a smaller portion aged 41–50 years old (11.9%). This result suggests that the teaching force in multigrade settings is relatively young to mid-career, indicating a dynamic mix of energy and growing professional experience.

The concentration in the 31–40 age bracket may imply that most teachers have acquired sufficient teaching experience, possibly ranging from 5 to 15 years, which is essential in handling the complexities of multigrade classrooms. According to Mulryan-Kyne (2022), teaching in multigrade settings demands flexibility, creativity, and experience, especially in classroom management and differentiated instruction. Hence, teachers within this age group are likely more adaptable and receptive to pedagogical innovations.

Table 2. *Sex*

<i>Sex</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Male	3	7.1
Female	39	92.9
Total	42	100.0

Table 2 displays the sex distribution of the respondents. The results indicate that majority of multigrade teachers are female (92.9%), while only a small portion (7.1%) are male. This data shows a significant gender imbalance in the multigrade teaching workforce, with females dominating the profession in the study's locale. The predominance of female teachers in elementary education, especially in rural and multigrade settings, is a consistent trend both nationally and globally.

In the Philippines, teaching is a female-dominated profession, with a large majority of teachers being women. Specifically, in primary education, 87.85% of teachers are female (2022 data). In the general public, 60% of teachers are female, and this percentage rises to 73.7% when considering K-12 education, according to RSIS International.

Table 3 presents the civil status of the respondents. The results reveal that the majority of multigrade teachers are married (85.7%), while only a small percentage are single (14.3%).

The findings suggest that individuals in marital relationships make up a significant portion of multigrade teachers in the study area. This may indicate that multigrade teaching, often in rural and less accessible areas, is more likely to be taken on by teachers who are more settled in life and possibly more rooted in their communities.

Table 3. *Civil Status*

<i>Civil Status</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Single	6	14.3
Married	36	85.7
Total	42	100.0

Being married could also suggest a level of personal stability that may support the challenges associated with teaching in a multigrade environment. This finding suggests that many multigrade teachers may have family responsibilities in addition to their teaching load. School leaders and policymakers should consider offering flexible working conditions, support systems such as on-site childcare (if applicable), or programs that recognize the dual roles teachers play in their professional and personal lives. Moreover, the emotional and social support systems that married teachers might have could serve as buffers against teacher burnout, especially in demanding environments like multigrade classrooms. However, time constraints due to family responsibilities could also impact their availability for professional development or extra duties.

Castro et al. (2020) indicated that in rural education contexts across Southeast Asia, married teachers often stay longer in post and are more committed to their local schools, contributing to greater continuity and stability. Day and Gu (2020) emphasized that personal life, including marital status, influences teachers' sense of identity, resilience, and long-term engagement in the profession. Roldan (2022) noted that Filipino teachers who are married often demonstrate a high sense of duty and long-term service, but they may also experience higher levels of stress due to balancing work and home responsibilities.

Table 4 shows that a significant portion of the multigrade teachers (42.9%) are pursuing graduate education and currently hold master's units. This is followed by those with only a bachelor's degree (33.3%) and those who have completed a full master's degree (23.8%).

Table 4. *Educational Attainment*

<i>Educational Attainment</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Bachelor's Degree	14	33.3
With Master's Units	18	42.9
Master's Degree	10	23.8
Total	42	100.0

The data indicates that the majority of multigrade teachers are engaged in or have completed graduate-level studies, which reflects their commitment to continuous professional growth and academic advancement. Teachers with master's units or degrees are generally considered more prepared for the pedagogical and instructional demands of teaching, particularly in complex contexts like multigrade settings. Pursuing advanced studies also suggests a drive for promotion, professional recognition, and mastery of content and methodology. Teachers with higher educational attainment are often more adept in instructional planning, student assessment, and classroom management. They also tend to be more open to innovation and reflective practices (Darling-Hammond, 2020).

This finding highlights the value of supporting teachers' graduate education through scholarships, study leaves, or flexible schedules, especially for those teaching in remote or multigrade contexts. Given the pedagogical complexity of multigrade teaching—where teachers simultaneously manage different grade levels—advanced training becomes even more crucial. Moreover, this composition of educational attainment can serve as a foundation for forming mentoring systems within the school, where those with advanced degrees can assist and mentor others. It also signals the readiness of these teachers to assume leadership roles in curriculum development, peer coaching, and professional learning communities.

Table 5. *Plantilla Position*

<i>Plantilla Position</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Teacher I	31	73.8
Teacher II	2	4.8
Teacher III	8	19.0
Master Teacher I	1	2.4
Total	42	100.0

Table 5 presents the plantilla positions of the multigrade teacher respondents. The majority hold the position of Teacher I (73.8%), followed by Teacher III (19.0%), while a few are ranked as Teacher II (4.8%) and Master Teacher I (2.4%).

The data reveal that most multigrade teachers remain at the entry-level position (Teacher I), despite their teaching experience or professional development. This suggests possible stagnation in career progression, which could be attributed to several factors, such as limited access to promotion opportunities, lack of support in preparing promotion documents, or challenges in meeting qualification requirements—particularly in remote schools where multigrade teaching is common. The presence of only one Master Teacher indicates that leadership and mentoring roles may be scarce or underdeveloped in these settings, potentially limiting the opportunities for peer learning and instructional support among teachers.

This result implies a need to strengthen career development mechanisms for multigrade teachers. School heads and district offices may need to provide targeted assistance in promotion preparation, mentoring, and training to help qualified teachers move up the ranks. The lack of higher-ranking teachers may also limit professional mentoring opportunities within schools. Creating systems for coaching and recognition can help sustain motivation and ensure that experienced and highly skilled teachers remain engaged and empowered.

Moreover, promoting qualified multigrade teachers can help raise the prestige of teaching in remote schools, possibly encouraging more educators to take up or stay in multigrade positions. Bernardo and Mendoza (2020) noted that many rural and multigrade teachers remain at Teacher I rank for extended periods due to systemic barriers in promotion, including limited administrative guidance and insufficient support documents. DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2007 (National Competency-Based Teacher Standards), encourages teachers to move through career stages by demonstrating competencies, but multigrade teachers may require more support and tailored guidance to meet these expectations.

Table 6. *Number of Trainings*

<i>Number of Trainings</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
None	12	28.6
1 – 3	18	42.9
4 – 6	10	23.8
More than 6	2	4.8
Total	42	100.0

The table reveals that 42.9% of the respondents have attended 1 to 3 trainings related to multigrade teaching, followed by 28.6% who have had no training at all. Meanwhile, 23.8% attended 4 to 6 trainings, and only 4.8% had more than 6 trainings. The findings show that while a portion of multigrade teachers have some exposure to professional development opportunities, a considerable number (28.6%) lack any training specific to multigrade education, which is concerning given the pedagogical demands of the role. Those who have attended only a few trainings may still feel underprepared to deal with the complexities of managing diverse learners across

multiple grade levels in a single classroom.

This gap suggests an inconsistency in the availability and accessibility of relevant training programs. It may also reflect a lack of prioritization of multigrade-specific capacity-building initiatives at the division or regional levels. Teachers without adequate training may resort to traditional or single-grade instructional approaches, which may not be effective in a multigrade setup.

Malicdem and Ramos (2020) found that multigrade teachers who lacked formal training struggled more with instructional planning and learner differentiation compared to those who had attended at least three targeted training sessions. UNESCO (2021) emphasized the need for specialized training for multigrade teachers, stating that multigrade classrooms demand unique teaching strategies that cannot be addressed by general education training alone. In addition, Crisostomo & Padua (2021) concluded that teacher preparedness, often reinforced through regular professional development, is directly linked to student performance and engagement in multigrade settings.

Challenges encountered by Multigrade Teachers in their Teaching Practices in terms of Intrinsic and Extrinsic

Table 7 shows the challenges encountered by multigrade teachers in their teaching practices in terms of intrinsic motivation. Among the intrinsic challenges, the item “I find the existing curriculum and textbooks not suitable for multigrade settings” received the highest mean (3.81, Strongly Agree), while “The language barrier affects my communication with some students” received the lowest mean (2.40, Disagree).

The high mean for curriculum and textbook suitability (3.81) suggests that multigrade teachers perceive a significant disconnect between the instructional materials provided and the practical demands of multigrade teaching. Most textbooks and curricular guides are designed for monograde instruction, which limits their flexibility and effectiveness in settings where one teacher manages multiple grade levels simultaneously.

Table 7. Intrinsic Challenges in Multigrade Teaching

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Description</i>
1. I find it difficult to manage multiple grade levels in one classroom.	3.64	Strongly Agree
2. I am stressed by the need to prepare separate lesson plans for each grade.	3.48	Strongly Agree
3. My teacher education did not prepare me for multigrade teaching.	3.24	Agree
4. I struggle to meet the different learning objectives of each grade.	3.55	Strongly Agree
5. I find the existing curriculum and textbooks not suitable for multigrade settings.	3.81	Strongly Agree
6. I experience difficulty in classroom management due to varied learner needs.	3.69	Strongly Agree
7. The language barrier affects my communication with some students.	2.40	Disagree
8. I experience high stress due to multiple responsibilities in the classroom.	3.79	Strongly Agree
9. I feel that I am not able to fulfill all the learning goals in multigrade classes.	2.93	Agree
10. I find it challenging to maintain discipline while addressing diverse learning needs.	3.69	Strongly Agree
Weighted Mean	3.42	Strongly Agree

Legend: 3.25 – 4.00 Strongly Agree 1.75 – 2.49 Disagree 2.50 – 3.24 Agree 1.00 – 1.74 Strongly Disagree

On the other hand, the relatively low mean for the language barrier item (2.40) implies that most teachers do not view language differences as a major challenge. This may be because the teachers and students in these multigrade classrooms likely share the same local dialect or mother tongue, reducing potential communication issues. The strong concern about instructional materials suggests a critical need for DepEd and educational planners to revise or supplement curriculum guides and textbooks with multigrade-appropriate content. Meanwhile, the minimal concern regarding language barriers presents an opportunity to maximize mother tongue-based instruction, especially in early grades, which is aligned with the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy of DepEd.

Nolledo (2020) emphasized that the “one-size-fits-all” curriculum often fails in multigrade environments and calls for differentiated materials and flexible learning guides tailored to combined-grade classes. According to UNESCO (2021), multigrade teaching is more effective when supported by context-specific curricula and materials that allow teachers to group learners across grades for common tasks. Ball and Youdell (2020) discussed how mismatched curriculum frameworks can increase teacher stress and reduce instructional time, particularly in multigrade and rural settings.

Table 8 presents the mean ratings of the extrinsic challenges encountered by multigrade teachers in their teaching practices. The data was gathered through a structured questionnaire using a 4-point Likert scale. The responses show a range of challenges related to environmental, institutional, and community factors that impact the teaching conditions in multigrade settings. The overall weighted mean is 2.90, which corresponds to “Agree,” indicating that teachers generally perceive extrinsic challenges as significant concerns in their daily instructional duties. The indicator with the highest mean is “Students’ absenteeism affects my ability to keep up with learning goals,” with a mean of 3.69 (Strongly Agree). The indicator with the lowest mean is “Parental involvement and cooperation are lacking

in the community,” with a mean of 1.64 (Strongly Disagree).

Table 8. *Extrinsic Challenges in Multigrade Teaching*

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Description</i>
1. The distance between my home and the school affects my teaching performance.	2.17	Disagree
2. I encounter accessibility issues when traveling to school, especially during bad weather.	2.95	Agree
3. The lack of school resources hinders effective multigrade teaching.	3.60	Strongly Agree
4. There are insufficient learning materials to cater to multiple grade levels.	1.69	Strongly Disagree
5. I experience a heavy workload due to teaching and administrative responsibilities.	2.90	Agree
6. The absence of co-teachers increases the difficulty of managing multigrade classes.	3.43	Strongly Agree
7. Students' absenteeism affects my ability to keep up with learning goals.	3.69	Strongly Agree
8. I face challenges due to the lack of physical classroom facilities.	3.48	Strongly Agree
9. Parental involvement and cooperation are lacking in the community.	1.64	Strongly Disagree
10. Environmental hazards near or on the way to school pose risks to my safety.	3.43	Strongly Agree
Weighted Mean	2.90	Agree

Legend: 3.25 – 4.00 Strongly Agree 1.75 – 2.49 Disagree 2.50 – 3.24 Agree 1.00 – 1.74 Strongly Disagree

The results from the table indicate that students' absenteeism is the most pressing extrinsic challenge faced by multigrade teachers. Teachers, already burdened with managing multiple grade levels, face additional strain as this issue disrupts the flow of instruction and weakens learner progress. In multigrade classrooms, where students are learning at diverse levels, consistent attendance becomes critical for preserving momentum in the lessons and preventing cumulative learning gaps. Teachers must continually adjust their instruction to accommodate absentees, which not only delays individual students' learning but can also create an overall disruption in the class.

Conversely, the low average score regarding insufficient parental involvement indicates that educators do not perceive this as a substantial obstacle. The evidence suggests that parents or guardians may be moderately involved or at least collaborative in facilitating their children's education. Teachers view this support as a significant asset that could enhance the educational atmosphere in rural or multigrade contexts. Educators appear to believe that, notwithstanding the difficulties of instructing in a multigrade environment, parental engagement does not significantly impede student achievement.

The concern about absenteeism has several important implications for schools and communities. To address this challenge, schools may need to implement community-based interventions and policies aimed at improving attendance. These strategies could include establishing reward systems for consistent attendance, which could motivate students to stay engaged. Strengthening home-school coordination through regular communication can also help in reducing absenteeism, as can implementing school-based feeding or wellness programs that encourage regular attendance by addressing health-related barriers. Additionally, home visits or awareness campaigns could be useful in reminding parents of the importance of consistent attendance for their children's education.

In contrast, the positive view of parental involvement suggests that schools should continue to reinforce these efforts. Schools can further include parents in school-based decision-making processes and encourage their active participation in learning support activities. Programs such as reading sessions or opportunities for classroom volunteering can create stronger ties between the school and the home, fostering a more supportive environment for students.

Studies provide evidence to support these conclusions. According to UNESCO (2021), absenteeism in rural and multigrade classrooms leads to inconsistent learning and instructional setbacks, ultimately impacting both students and educators. Calderon (2020) pointed out the compounded burden that absenteeism creates in multigrade settings, where teachers must dedicate additional time and effort to catch up students who have missed lessons. On the other hand, Espiritu and Guevara (2021) found that when parents in Philippine schools are actively involved, both student engagement and attendance improve, leading to a more stable and productive learning environment. Finally, DepEd (2020) emphasized that schools with strong parent-teacher partnerships experience better student performance and reduced absenteeism, particularly in geographically isolated areas where multigrade teaching is common.

According to their written responses, one multigrade teacher responded that “Multigrade teaching feels like juggling multiple balls in the air—sometimes you focus on one grade and worry if you’re neglecting the others. The curriculum is not designed for this setup, and most of the time, I end up creating my own materials just to make learning meaningful for all my learners. It’s tiring but rewarding.” This teacher’s reflection echoes the quantitative data presented in Table 9 regarding intrinsic challenges, particularly the highest-rated item: “I find the existing curriculum and textbooks not suitable for multigrade settings” (Mean = 3.81, Strongly Agree). The metaphor of “juggling multiple balls” vividly illustrates the mental and instructional strain that multigrade teachers experience when balancing different grade levels simultaneously. This aligns with Nolleto’s (2020) critique of the standardized curriculum, which fails to accommodate the blended nature of multigrade classes.

Another response from the teacher mentioned that “The hardest part is not the teaching—it’s when students stop coming to school. You plan your lessons and then realize half of the class is absent. It feels like starting over again and again.” This supports the results found in Table 10, where “Students’ absenteeism affects my ability to keep up with learning goals” received a high mean of 3.69 (Strongly Agree), making it the most serious extrinsic challenge.

The quote highlights the emotional and professional toll of absenteeism on teachers. The cyclical nature of planning and re-planning creates instructional fatigue and breaks the continuity of learning, especially detrimental in a multigrade setup where students depend heavily on teacher-guided instruction. This validates findings from Calderon (2020), who noted that absenteeism significantly compounds the difficulty of managing learning progression in mixed-grade classrooms.

Strengthened home-school partnerships and attendance incentives, as also supported by DepEd (2020) and Espiritu & Guevara (2021), may mitigate this issue, as previously recommended.

Coping Strategies employed by Multigrade Teachers to address these Challenges

Table 9. *Intrinsic Coping Mechanisms in Multigrade Teaching*

Indicators	Mean	Description
1. I create flexible lesson plans to adapt to varying learning levels.	3.55	Strongly Agree
2. I manage stress through self-care practices like meditation or journaling.	3.36	Strongly Agree
3. I reflect regularly on my teaching practices to improve.	3.48	Strongly Agree
4. I design instructional materials suited to multigrade settings.	3.62	Strongly Agree
5. I use multi-level teaching techniques such as peer tutoring.	3.29	Strongly Agree
6. I independently search for teaching resources online.	3.67	Strongly Agree
7. I prioritize tasks to manage workload efficiently.	3.36	Strongly Agree
8. I maintain a positive mindset despite the challenges.	3.60	Strongly Agree
9. I assess student progress regularly to adjust instruction.	3.55	Strongly Agree
10. I take short breaks during the day to recharge.	3.00	Agree
Weighted Mean	3.45	Strongly Agree

Legend: 3.25 – 4.00 Strongly Agree 1.75 – 2.49 Disagree 2.50 – 3.24 Agree 1.00 – 1.74 Strongly Disagree

Table 9 presents the coping strategies employed by multigrade teachers to address the challenges they encounter, focusing on intrinsic coping mechanisms. The results highlight two key strategies with the highest and lowest means, reflecting how teachers adjust to the demands of their unique teaching environment.

The highest mean score is for the indicator "I independently search for teaching resources online," with a mean of 3.67 (Strongly Agree). This finding suggests that multigrade teachers actively take the initiative to find additional resources and materials beyond those provided by the school to enhance their teaching. Given the diverse needs in multigrade classrooms, where different grade levels are taught simultaneously, teachers are often required to be resourceful and creative in sourcing materials that cater to varied learning levels. This proactive approach to resource acquisition enables teachers to deliver more tailored and effective instruction.

The lowest mean score is for "I take short breaks during the day to recharge," with a mean of 3.00 (Agree). While this still falls within the "Agree" category, it indicates that taking breaks might not be as prioritized by multigrade teachers. This issue could be due to the overwhelming workload and the constant need to manage multiple grade levels, which may leave teachers with limited opportunities to rest during the school day. The importance of recharging is critical for preserving long-term teacher effectiveness, as teacher burnout is a known challenge, especially in demanding educational settings like multigrade classrooms.

The high score for searching teaching resources online emphasizes the need for continuous professional development and access to a variety of educational resources. Schools and educational institutions should consider providing teachers with better access to digital tools and professional learning communities where they can share and collaborate on resources tailored for multigrade classrooms. Furthermore, the low score for taking breaks signals a potential area for improvement in teacher well-being. Schools might consider implementing policies or creating schedules that allow for regular breaks or planning time to help teachers recharge and manage stress more effectively.

The importance of teachers' resourcefulness in multigrade settings is supported by UNESCO (2021), which notes that teachers in multigrade classrooms often have to be creative in sourcing resources to meet the diverse needs of their students. Pangilinan (2020) also highlighted that multigrade teachers frequently turn to online platforms to find materials that address the different educational levels they teach, allowing for a more inclusive and effective approach to education.

On the other hand, the need for breaks to mitigate teacher burnout is supported by research from Maslach and Leiter (2020), which found that teachers who regularly experience stress without sufficient time to recover are at higher risk for burnout. They suggest that promoting well-being through scheduled breaks and mental health support can lead to improved teacher satisfaction and effectiveness. Goddard et al. (2021) further emphasized that teachers' emotional well-being is crucial for sustaining their long-term effectiveness in challenging teaching environments such as multigrade classrooms.

Another response from the teacher mentioned that “I can’t rely on school-provided materials, so I search online almost every night. I

download worksheets, activities, and even classroom posters. It's tiring, but it really helps me teach better." This supports the results, where the statement "I independently search for teaching resources online" received the highest mean of 3.67 (Strongly Agree). This suggests that multigrade teachers heavily depend on their own initiative and digital platforms to acquire relevant instructional materials suited for multiple grade levels.

The quote emphasizes the teacher's dedication to delivering effective instruction despite limited school resources. It illustrates how intrinsic motivation—driven by professional commitment—pushes teachers to go beyond standard expectations. In multigrade classrooms, where diverse learners are grouped together, such resourcefulness becomes essential for differentiated instruction.

This finding is consistent with Pangilinan (2020), who emphasized that many multigrade teachers in the Philippines supplement their lessons with internet-based resources to address curriculum gaps. UNESCO (2021) also stressed the need for adaptable and self-directed learning strategies among teachers in under-resourced settings. As highlighted earlier, strengthening access to digital tools and curated online content could significantly support teachers' efforts and enhance instructional quality in multigrade settings.

Table 10 presents the extrinsic coping mechanisms employed by multigrade teachers to address the challenges they face. The results show a variety of strategies, some demonstrating effective approaches with higher agreement scores, and others highlighting areas requiring improvement.

The highest mean score is for the indicator "I consult school heads or coordinators for guidance and support," with a mean of 3.83 (Strongly Agree). This result suggests that multigrade teachers highly value the support and guidance they receive from school leaders. Consulting school heads or coordinators is a crucial strategy for teachers in managing the complexities of multigrade classrooms, as it provides them with direction and assistance in navigating instructional and administrative challenges. The result reflects a collaborative approach to problem-solving within the school structure. Similarly, "I make use of available technologies and multimedia tools" received a high mean of 3.76 (Strongly Agree), indicating that multigrade teachers leverage modern tools and technologies to enhance their teaching practices. The use of technology in the classroom allows teachers to address the diverse learning needs of students in a multigrade setting, offering multimedia resources that cater to different learning styles and levels.

Table 10. *Extrinsic Coping Mechanisms in Multigrade Teaching*

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Description</i>
1. I collaborate with fellow multigrade teachers to share strategies.	3.19	Agree
2. I attend professional development to enhance my teaching skills.	2.95	Agree
3. I consult school heads or coordinators for guidance and support.	3.83	Strongly Agree
4. I request instructional materials from the school or division.	1.95	Disagree
5. I involve parents in supporting student learning.	3.21	Agree
6. I make use of available technologies and multimedia tools.	3.76	Strongly Agree
7. I participate in teacher learning action cells (LAC sessions).	3.60	Strongly Agree
8. I network with teachers from other schools to get new ideas.	1.86	Disagree
9. I ask for help from community stakeholders when needed.	3.12	Agree
10. I join teacher support groups (e.g., Facebook groups or associations).	2.24	Disagree
Weighted Mean	2.97	Agree

Legend: 3.25 – 4.00 Strongly Agree 1.75 – 2.49 Disagree 2.50 – 3.24 Agree 1.00 – 1.74 Strongly Disagree

On the other hand, the lowest mean scores are for the indicators "I request instructional materials from the school or division" (mean = 1.95, Disagree) and "I join teacher support groups (e.g., Facebook groups or associations)" (mean = 2.24, Disagree). These lower scores suggest that, despite the importance of adequate instructional materials and peer support, teachers may not be utilizing these resources as effectively as they could. This decline could be due to insufficient availability or access to instructional materials from the school or division or a lack of active participation in online teacher communities and support groups, which could provide additional strategies and resources.

The high scores for consulting school heads and using technology suggest that institutional support and access to digital tools are crucial in enabling multigrade teachers to succeed. Schools and educational leaders should prioritize fostering an environment where teachers can freely consult their administrators and access the necessary technologies. Additionally, given the lower scores on requesting materials and joining teacher support groups, there is a need to improve the accessibility of instructional resources from the school or division level and encourage teachers to engage more actively in professional networks. Such goals could be achieved through structured programs that facilitate these interactions.

The finding that teachers value guidance from school leaders is in line with Leithwood et al. (2021), who emphasize that school leadership plays a critical role in supporting teachers, particularly in challenging educational settings like multigrade classrooms. Fullan (2020) also highlighted the importance of strong leadership and collaboration within schools to improve teaching practices and outcomes, particularly when teachers face multifaceted challenges.

On the use of technology, Bakia et al. (2021) stressed that technology can greatly enhance teaching effectiveness by offering a range of resources and instructional materials that support diverse learning needs. However, the low scores for requesting materials and participating in teacher support groups highlight a gap in resource accessibility and professional community engagement. Hargreaves

(2000) discussed how teacher networks and peer support can be vital in addressing challenges and improving teaching practices, but the lack of engagement in these areas suggests that further effort is needed to foster collaboration among teachers.

Relationship Between the Respondents' Challenges Encountered and the Coping Practices Used by Multigrade Teachers

Table 11. *Relationship¹ Respondents' Coping Practices in terms of Intrinsic Coping Mechanisms and Challenges Encountered*

Variables	Intrinsic Coping Mechanism		Remarks	Decision
	r-value	p-value		
Intrinsic challenges	0.132	0.403	Not Significant	Failed to reject H ₀
Extrinsic Challenges	-0.238	0.130	Not Significant	Failed to reject H ₀

Legend: 1 – based on Spearman's rho Correlation ** - $P < 0.01$ *** - $P < 0.001$ ns - $P > 0.05$ * - $P < 0.05$

Table 11 displays the relationship between the respondents' coping practices in terms of intrinsic coping mechanisms and challenges encountered. The result revealed that the respondents' coping practices, in terms of intrinsic coping mechanisms, had no significant relationship with the challenges they encountered in teaching multigrade classes. Thus, the null hypothesis, which states no significant relationship exists between the respondents' coping practices in terms of intrinsic coping mechanisms and challenges encountered, was not rejected.

The lack of a significant relationship between the coping mechanisms and challenges encountered suggests that the strategies employed by multigrade teachers may not always directly mitigate the challenges they face. This could imply that while coping mechanisms are advantageous, they may not be tailored enough to address specific challenges in a way that leads to significant improvements. Furthermore, these findings could highlight the complex nature of multigrade teaching, where various factors may influence how challenges are encountered and managed, beyond individual coping strategies.

Furthermore, teachers might rely on coping mechanisms that do not directly relate to their specific challenges or that external factors (e.g., lack of resources, institutional support) may play a more prominent role in the challenges they face, which coping mechanisms alone cannot address. Additionally, the lack of significance may indicate that teachers require more targeted support or training to effectively connect their coping strategies with the specific challenges they encounter in multigrade classrooms.

The results can be interpreted through the lens of Lazarus and Folkman's Stress and Coping Theory (1984), which distinguishes between problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. Their theory ideally aligns coping strategies with the type of challenge or stressor an individual is facing. The lack of a significant relationship in this study could suggest that teachers might be employing more emotion-focused coping mechanisms, which aim to manage stress rather than directly solving the specific problems of multigrade teaching.

Moreover, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986) could also help clarify this finding. Bandura argues that self-efficacy, or the belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations, plays a central role in how people confront challenges. If teachers' coping strategies are not deeply tied to improving their perceived self-efficacy or are not addressing the root causes of their challenges, they may not result in significant changes in the challenges they face.

Kyriacou (2020) found that teachers' coping mechanisms are often influenced by external factors such as school culture, leadership, and available resources, rather than being solely dependent on internal psychological mechanisms. This may explain why intrinsic coping strategies in this study did not show a significant relationship with the challenges teachers faced.

Table 12. *Relationship² Respondents' Coping Practices in terms of Extrinsic Coping Mechanisms and Challenges Encountered*

Variables	Extrinsic Coping Mechanism		Remarks	Decision
	r-value	p-value		
Intrinsic challenges	0.047	0.769	Not Significant	Failed to reject H ₀
Extrinsic Challenges	-0.017	0.915	Not Significant	Failed to reject H ₀

Legend: 2 – based on Spearman's rho Correlation ** - $P < 0.01$ *** - $P < 0.001$ ns - $P > 0.05$ * - $P < 0.05$

Table 12 presents the relationship between the respondents' coping practices in terms of extrinsic coping mechanisms and challenges encountered. The result revealed that the respondents' coping practices in terms of extrinsic coping mechanisms had no significant relationship with their challenges encountered in teaching multigrade classes. Thus, the null hypothesis, which states no significant relationship exists between the respondents' coping practices in terms of extrinsic coping mechanisms and challenges encountered, was not rejected.

The lack of a significant relationship between extrinsic coping mechanisms and the challenges faced by multigrade teachers suggests that external factors such as institutional support, collaboration with colleagues, or parental involvement may not be sufficiently addressing the core challenges that teachers experience in multigrade settings. While extrinsic coping mechanisms are essential in providing support, they may not directly influence or reduce the complexities of teaching multigrade classrooms. Their absence implies that these strategies might need to be better aligned with the specific needs and difficulties of multigrade teaching or that they might require more robust implementation and engagement from external parties, such as school leaders, policymakers, or the broader

community.

On top of that, this result highlights that multigrade teaching challenges may be multifaceted, involving issues that are not addressed by external coping mechanisms alone. For instance, issues such as a lack of resources or an overwhelming workload may require systemic changes in educational practices, school infrastructure, and resource distribution, rather than just coping strategies that are primarily aimed at short-term relief. Lazarus and Folkman's Stress and Coping Theory (1984) posited that coping mechanisms should ideally be aligned with the nature of the stressor or challenge at hand. The absence of significant correlation in this study could indicate that the coping mechanisms employed by multigrade teachers—such as collaboration with colleagues, attending professional development sessions, or requesting resources—might not have been adequate or tailored enough to address the specific challenges posed by the nature of multigrade teaching. The lack of correlation could suggest a mismatch between the challenges teachers face and the external coping strategies available to them.

According to Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986), coping mechanisms must be effective in enhancing self-efficacy, or the belief in one's ability to manage challenges. If the extrinsic coping mechanisms are not sufficiently empowering teachers or providing tangible solutions to address the issues in multigrade classrooms, those factors could explain the lack of significant relationship between these mechanisms and the challenges encountered. Additionally, Kyriacou (2020) argued that external support, including professional development and collaboration, is crucial in helping teachers cope with classroom challenges. However, if these supports don't strategically align with the unique needs of multigrade teachers, their impact could potentially diminish.

Regression Analysis Between the Respondents' Challenges Encountered and the Coping Practices Used by Multigrade Teachers

Table 13. Variables¹ that Best Predict Respondents' Intrinsic Coping Mechanism

Indicator	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	4.180	.844		4.953	<.001
Age	.048	.048	.195	.998	.326
Sex	-.096	.100	-.169	-.964	.342
Civil status	-.018	.072	-.043	-.254	.801
Educational Attainment	-.005	.046	-.025	-.109	.914
Plantilla position	-.036	.038	-.215	-.935	.357
Number of trainings	.011	.034	.061	.314	.756
Intrinsic challenges	-.004	.164	-.004	-.027	.979
Extrinsic challenges	-.189	.162	-.213	-1.162	.253
R = 0.373 R ² = 0.138 F = 0.661 Sig. = 0.722 ^{ns}					

Legend: 1 – based on Linear Regression ** - P < 0.01 *** - P < 0.001 ns - P > 0.05 * - P < 0.05

Table 13 presents the variables that best predict respondents' intrinsic coping mechanisms. The respondents' intrinsic coping mechanisms were not affected by their demographic profile and challenges encountered in teaching multigrade classes. This finding implied that none from the respondents' demographic profile and challenges encountered affect the intrinsic coping mechanisms.

The R² value of 0.138 implies that 13.8% of the variance in the respondents' intrinsic coping mechanisms can be explained by the demographic profile and challenges encountered. Hence, 86.2% of the learners' intrinsic coping mechanisms difference can be attributed to other variables not included in the regression model.

The regression analysis is insignificant, with an F-value of 0.661 and a p-value of 0.722. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that "the respondents' demographic profile and challenges encountered did not significantly predict the intrinsic coping mechanisms" was not rejected.

The lack of significant predictors for intrinsic coping mechanisms implies that multigrade teachers' personal coping strategies may be more influenced by individual factors or external resources that were not examined in this study. For instance, the individual teacher's personal resilience, mindset, or coping style may play a significant role in how they manage the challenges of teaching in a multigrade classroom, rather than the demographic profile or the challenges themselves. This finding aligned with the theory of individual differences in coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), which suggested that people vary greatly in their ability to cope with stress based on psychological traits and personal experiences, rather than external circumstances alone.

The R² value also points to the limited explanatory power of demographic factors and challenges in predicting coping behaviors. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986) posited that self-efficacy and personal capabilities play a major role in how individuals respond to challenges. Teachers with high levels of self-efficacy, for example, may be more likely to use effective coping strategies, regardless of their demographic characteristics or the specific challenges they face in their classrooms.

This finding also suggests that external factors such as institutional support, professional development, or social and emotional support systems may be more influential in shaping the coping mechanisms of multigrade teachers than demographic factors or the challenges

they face in the classroom. In particular, Goleman's (1995) Emotional Intelligence Theory highlighted how emotional awareness and regulation, which may be cultivated through external professional development or emotional support, can influence an individual's coping strategies.

Moreover, the insignificance of the relationship between intrinsic coping mechanisms and challenges encountered challenges the assumption that demographic factors should be central to understanding how teachers cope with the difficulties of multigrade teaching. Kyriacou (2020) suggested that teacher coping mechanisms are often shaped more by internal psychological factors and their perceived level of support from colleagues and the administration than by objective challenges such as class size or student diversity.

Patton and McMahon (2020) found that teachers' coping strategies were often shaped by factors like personal resilience, professional experience, and emotional regulation, rather than external circumstances alone. This study suggests that intrinsic coping mechanisms might be more deeply rooted in the teacher's individual personality and mindset than in any demographic characteristic or classroom challenge.

Additionally, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2021) argued that while demographic factors can influence a teacher's job satisfaction, their ability to manage classroom stress and challenges is more closely tied to their psychological resilience and coping skills, which may be more malleable and less influenced by factors such as age, sex, or educational attainment. In conclusion, while the demographic factors and challenges encountered by the respondents do not significantly predict their intrinsic coping mechanisms, the evidence suggests that teachers' personal characteristics, emotional intelligence, and intrinsic motivation are likely more critical in shaping their ability to cope with the challenges of multigrade teaching. Thus, future research should focus on exploring these more nuanced, individual-level factors to better understand how multigrade teachers develop and maintain effective coping strategies.

Table 14. Variables that Best Predict Respondents' Intrinsic Coping Mechanism

Indicator	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	2.421	.845		2.864	.007
Age	.068	.048	.280	1.412	.167
Sex	-.012	.100	-.021	-.119	.906
Civil status	-.050	.072	-.120	-.692	.494
Educational attainment	.045	.046	.231	.974	.337
Plantilla position	.016	.038	.096	.411	.684
Number of trainings	-.031	.034	-.178	-.906	.372
Intrinsic challenges	.034	.164	.035	.208	.836
Extrinsic challenges	.130	.163	.148	.800	.429
R = 0.342 R ² = 0.117 F = 0.547 Sig. = 0.812 ^{ns}					

Legend: 2 – based on Linear Regression ** - P < 0.01 *** - P < 0.001 ns - P > 0.05 * - P < 0.05

Table 14 displays the variables that best predict respondents' extrinsic coping mechanisms. The respondents' extrinsic coping mechanisms remained unaffected by their demographic profile or the challenges they faced while teaching multigrade classes. This finding implied that none of the respondents' demographic profiles and challenges encountered affect the extrinsic coping mechanisms.

The R² value of 0.117 implies that 11.7% of the variance in the respondents' extrinsic coping mechanisms can be explained by the demographic profile and challenges encountered. Hence, other variables not included in the regression model account for 88.3% of the learners' extrinsic coping mechanisms difference.

The regression analysis is insignificant, with an F-value of 0.574 and a p-value of 0.812. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that "the respondents' demographic profile and challenges encountered did not significantly predict the intrinsic coping mechanisms" was not rejected.

The findings suggest that external factors, such as demographic characteristics and the challenges teachers face, do not significantly influence the extrinsic coping mechanisms of multigrade teachers. The result highlights the possibility that extrinsic coping strategies may be more influenced by other sources of support, such as school leadership, institutional resources, or peer collaboration, rather than individual characteristics or specific classroom challenges. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986) suggested that external factors like social support networks, including colleagues, mentors, and administrators, have a significant impact on teachers' coping strategies. In this case, teachers may rely on institutional and professional support systems more than their personal characteristics to manage challenges in their teaching environment.

Additionally, the R² value of 0.117, which indicates that only 11.7% of the variance in extrinsic coping mechanisms is explained by the factors in the model, points to the limited explanatory power of demographic variables and the challenges faced by teachers. This conclusion implies that teachers' responses to external challenges may be more heavily influenced by other variables, such as the availability of professional development programs, teaching materials, or community involvement, which were not captured by this regression analysis. Kyriacou (2020) and Richter et al. (2021) argued that teachers' coping mechanisms are heavily shaped by external

support systems, such as professional networks, school leadership, and the provision of resources, which may have a more profound effect on coping with teaching challenges than demographic characteristics.

Moreover, the lack of significant relationships between extrinsic coping mechanisms and demographic factors suggests that teachers may develop coping strategies based on the resources available to them, rather than relying on personal attributes or the specific challenges they encounter. Teachers may, for instance, turn to their colleagues for advice, request instructional materials from the school, or utilize technologies that are available to them, regardless of their personal characteristics or specific classroom challenges. This reinforces the idea that Vygotsky's Social Development Theory (1978), which emphasized the role of social interactions and collaboration in learning, could be a useful framework for understanding how teachers draw on external support systems to enhance their coping mechanisms.

Richter et al. (2021) emphasized the role of organizational and social support in shaping teachers' coping strategies, arguing that external support structures, such as school leadership and collegial networks, are crucial for teachers in managing stress and coping with the challenges of their work. This study echoes the findings of the current research, which indicates that extrinsic coping mechanisms are more influenced by external resources than by teachers' demographic characteristics.

Hughes et al. (2020) also supported the view that the availability of resources and support networks plays a significant role in teachers' ability to cope with classroom challenges. Teachers with access to professional development opportunities, mentoring, and peer collaboration are better able to manage the stresses associated with teaching, particularly in demanding environments such as multigrade classrooms.

Furthermore, the regression analysis suggests that extrinsic coping mechanisms among multigrade teachers are less influenced by demographic characteristics and classroom challenges than by external support systems and professional networks. The limited explanatory power of the demographic variables in predicting extrinsic coping mechanisms indicates that there must be further research into other influential factors, such as school policies, peer collaboration, and institutional resources, that may better explain how teachers cope with the challenges of multigrade teaching.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, the study draws the following conclusions:

Multigrade teachers employ both intrinsic and extrinsic coping mechanisms solve the problems they face. These mechanisms play a crucial role in their ability to manage the demands of teaching multigrade classes. Teachers are highly engaged in intrinsic coping strategies such as seeking resources, designing flexible lessons, and maintaining a positive mindset, which reflect their intrinsic motivation to improve their teaching practices.

While intrinsic mechanisms are vital, extrinsic coping mechanisms such as seeking support from school heads and attending professional development programs are equally crucial. These mechanisms help teachers feel supported and connected to the larger educational community. Teachers may be neglecting short breaks or informal networks like online teacher support groups, which could contribute to burnout and a sense of isolation.

The lack of significant relationships between teachers' demographic profiles, challenges encountered, and coping practices suggests that these factors do not directly predict the coping mechanisms teachers adopt. Other variables, perhaps related to school culture, personal resilience, or community support, may be more influential.

Based on the conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations are made for teachers, school administrators, and future researchers:

Teachers. Teachers may be encouraged to take regular breaks during the day to prevent burnout. Institutions can help by creating environments that allow for brief respites, even within a busy schedule. Teachers should engage more actively in informal support networks, such as teacher groups on social media, where they can exchange ideas and resources. Participation in these networks can reduce feelings of isolation and provide additional coping mechanisms.

School Administrators. School heads and coordinators may continue to provide guidance and support for multigrade teachers. Regular check-ins and mentoring can help alleviate challenges and improve teachers' coping mechanisms. They should ensure that multigrade teachers have access to adequate instructional materials and resources tailored to the needs of multigrade classrooms. They should prioritize teacher well-being by encouraging a balanced workload, offering time for breaks, and supporting mental health initiatives to reduce stress and prevent burnout.

Supervisors. With data-driven insights into the instructional challenges and coping practices of multigrade teachers, they may design more effective monitoring, evaluation, and support programs tailored to the needs of multigrade educators and help provide technical assistance and trainings on instructional strategies that are aligned with national education standards and policies.

Teacher Associations and Unions. Teacher associations and unions can advocate for the rights of multigrade teachers, ensuring they have fair working conditions, adequate professional development opportunities, and access to mental health resources. Unions can also

provide platforms for teachers to voice their concerns and collaborate on solutions to common challenges faced in multigrade classrooms.

Curriculum Planners. They may take into account the unique dynamics of multigrade classrooms when designing instructional materials and curricula. They should create flexible, adaptive curricula that allow teachers to effectively manage students from different grade levels within the same classroom. Such materials could include modular lesson plans, differentiated instructional strategies, and resources that cater to varied learning speeds and levels. Planners should ensure that the curriculum is not only academically rigorous but also manageable for teachers, providing clear guidance on how to teach overlapping content to students of varying ages and abilities. Furthermore, they should incorporate cross-curricular approaches, where subjects are interlinked, enabling teachers to cover multiple areas of learning in a single lesson.

Future Researchers. Future research could investigate other variables, such as school culture, teacher resilience, and community support, which may better predict teachers' coping mechanisms in multigrade settings. A longitudinal study could track the coping strategies of multigrade teachers over time, examining how they evolve with changing demographics, school policies, and external factors like technological advancements. Researchers could compare the coping mechanisms of multigrade teachers in different regions or countries to identify best practices and adapt successful strategies for local contexts.

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