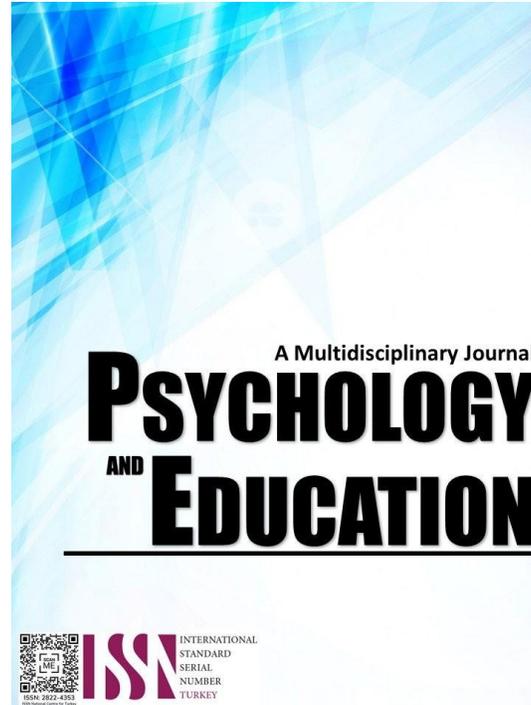


STORIES OF RESILIENCE: EXPLORING TEACHER EXPERIENCES IN CONGESTED CLASSROOMS



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Stories of Resilience: Exploring Teacher Experiences in Congested Classrooms

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Abstract

This qualitative study navigates the valuable experiences of the public secondary school teachers and how they cope with the prevailing effects of congested classrooms, a persistent and debilitating challenge within the context of the Philippine education system. Rooted in Resilience-Building Theory and the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, this phenomenological inquiry explores how these teachers significantly navigate, manage, and thrive in overcrowded classrooms. Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with six junior high school educators from President Quirino National High School in Sultan Kudarat. The result of the Thematic analysis unveiled five key themes: the complex challenges arising from the limited physical spaces and behavioral issues; adaptive teaching and management methodologies applied to optimize the constrained environment; the prevailing emotional and physical impact of overcrowding on teachers' well-being; the important role of collaboration and peer support among teachers; and the inspiring transformative influence of resilience, which fosters innovative practices and professional advancements. Despite disparities in resource limitations and structural obstacles, teachers demonstrated impressive creativity, transforming daily challenges into opportunities for ongoing improvement and enhanced student learning outcomes. The findings highlighted the urgent need for comprehensive and continuous support systems, professional development, and policy measures that manage class sizes, promote mental health, and foster collaborative school cultures. By shedding light on these resilience-driven narratives, this research offers new and valuable insights for educators, school administrators, and policymakers dedicated to crafting more sustainable, attainable, and inclusive learning environments. Ultimately, the study promotes systemic reforms that discuss the underlying causes of congestion while acknowledging teachers' critical role in nurturing adaptable, student-centered settings that benefit learners and educators alike.

Keywords: *teacher resilience, congested classrooms, qualitative study, coping strategies, adaptive teaching, Philippine education*

Introduction

Congested classrooms pose a detrimental challenge in education, particularly for teachers striving to create effective learning environments. This journey sought to examine how educators in the frontline strive to adapt and be resilient to these adverse conditions, focusing on their innovative and creative strategies for addressing classroom congestion. By fully and deeply understanding these experiences, we aim to shed light on these systemic issues contributing to overcrowding while exploring practical solutions to enhance teacher well-being, student outcomes, and overall educational quality.

The Department of Education (DepEd) still bases its class size on a standard of 45 students per classroom, as indicated in DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2006, for both elementary and secondary levels. However, actual class sizes often exceed this standard due to factors such as insufficient funding, rapid population growth, and inadequate infrastructure. These issues exacerbate classroom congestion, which adversely impacts both the teaching and learning processes. In support, Ogunrinbokun et al. (2023) stated that congestion was speculated to be responsible for the untold hardship, corruption, social disorder, poor standard of living, crime, low standard of education, inadequate instructional materials, production of poor or few quality textbooks, congested classrooms, and attendant education in characters.

Lapes et al. (2024) stated that a congested classroom was one in which the number of students exceeded the ideal level, causing disruption to the teaching and learning process and potentially impeding student engagement and performance. This situation leads to a learning environment where the number of students surpasses and exceeds the ideal number that the physical atmosphere and the teacher's attention can handle. This overcrowding leads to many barriers that hinder the teaching and learning process. This includes struggles in a classroom setting, declining student participation, and reduced opportunities for self-learning, which are essential for achieving a productive educational outcome.

The consequences of neglecting this issue are profound and far-reaching. Failure to address the experiences of teachers in overcrowded classrooms could exacerbate existing problems, leading to increased teacher burnout, reduced educational quality, and compromised student performance. In a study conducted by Dauden (2023), it was identified that the challenges of overcrowded classrooms included difficulty in applying and implementing a competence-based curriculum and poor classroom management. Many teachers struggle to engage their students and provide the necessary individualized attention mandated for academic success when they are unable to manage their classrooms effectively. Furthermore, as class sizes grow, teachers find it increasingly difficult to understand and address their students' diverse needs. As a result, a significant amount of time is spent on managing disputes and addressing behavioral issues (Osai et al., 2021).

Likuru and Mwila (2022) stated that overcrowded classrooms affect the teaching and learning process since they limit the application and implementation of a competence-based curriculum and supportive classroom management practices, which aid the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, the effects of these challenges can negatively affect students' emotional and social development, ultimately undermining their long-term educational outcomes. It also found that it had a wide range of adverse effects on health-related concerns, which affected learning processes and harmed academic performance, including physical, mental, and psychological health (Lapes et al., 2024).

Seeking to explore the lived experiences of teachers operating in overcrowded educational environments is a helpful avenue to delve into the resilience strategies and coping mechanisms teacher employs that may serve as an inspiration to all of us in the pursuit of sharing knowledge with young minds. The pursuit of education is a basic human right and a crucial driver of progress for both individuals and society as a whole (Talikan et al., 2024). An in-depth study of the lived experiences of teachers working in overcrowded classrooms in the Philippines is a valuable step to identify the resilience stories Filipino Teachers live with. Acknowledging the detrimental effects of these congested classrooms in the Philippine context is pivotal in highlighting the urgent need for in-depth research aimed at understanding and addressing the struggles of Filipino educators. It was observable that many efforts have been made within the educational sector to address the challenges posed by classroom congestion; however, this issue persists within the current educational system. Similarly, Osai et al. (2021) stated that, despite significant steps being accomplished, especially in access to basic education, substantial difficulties remain, particularly in developing countries.

Finally, identifying the stories of resilience among teachers is important. The insights garnered from this study are crucial since they could light the way for informed policymakers and make changes at all school levels. With a strong lens on prioritizing and setting urgency on the well-being of teachers and promoting ample educational environments that encourage effective teaching practices, we can expect increased job satisfaction and decreased cases of work dropouts among educators, which will develop the overall learning experience in the school. It's essential to develop a deeper and more accurate understanding of how teachers in the Philippines can foster resilience in response to challenges posed by overcrowded classrooms. Addressing this issue can be achieved through strategies depending on the causes of classroom congestion for developed learning, all of which enhance teachers' professional growth and satisfaction to improve the quality of education for all students.

Research Questions

This study outlined the Stories of Resilience of Teachers in Congested Classrooms in a Public Secondary School. Particularly, it shed light on the following queries:

1. What challenges do the teachers face in congested classrooms while teaching and managing?
2. How do teachers contextualize their strategies and cope with classroom congestion?
3. What are the stories of resilience and success that are rooted in experiences while addressing and managing congested classrooms?

Methodology

Research Design

The research employed the Descriptive Phenomenological Method, which is most appropriate for investigating the targeted lived experiences of teachers' resilience in overcrowded classrooms. This method enabled the researcher to gain a rich understanding of how teachers viewed and understood the difficulties they encountered in overcrowded classrooms. By giving precedence to their voices, the researcher hoped to reveal the complex ways in which educators manage stress and develop resilience, which fits in exactly with the research goals and objectives of comprehending their reactions to challenging classroom situations.

To gather data, the researcher used semi-structured interview questionnaires, which enabled open-ended responses while still focusing on certain guiding questions related to resilience. This was an effective mode for having in-depth discussions of individuals' experiences, coping processes, and instances of resilience. The selection of the participants was deliberate with the hope of obtaining a diverse group of educators by experience, subject, and demographic background so that a broad spectrum of views concerning resilience within a variety of classroom environments is included.

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the interview data, a method consistent with phenomenological philosophy, which involves locating and interpreting patterns within participants' accounts. The method demonstrated the richness of teachers' experiences and responses to environmental pressures. Theoretical underpinnings, including Resilience-Building Theory, the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, and Critical Pedagogy, grounded the research design. These models enriched the understanding of resilience as an interactive process, drawing attention to the multiple dimensions of teachers' experiences and contributing to a broader discourse on education and teacher well-being.

Participants

The informants for this research were Junior High School teachers from President Quirino National High School who are currently handling advisory classes with student populations exceeding the DepEd policy standards. There was a total of 5 teachers who took

part in the study, chosen according to particular criteria: each participant should have a minimum of three years of teaching experience and be in charge of advisory classes in a range of subject matters, such as but not limited to Mathematics, Science, and English. This selection procedure tries to collect a variety of lived experiences from teachers who are dealing with the issue of overcrowded advisory classes.

The significance of the lived experiences obtained from these particular participants is based on their exclusive understandings regarding how class size influences student learning and engagement. By learning the struggles and compromises they faced, this study intends to contribute to the discussion in the fields of classroom management, education policy, and the overall quality of instruction in crowded environments.

Instrument

To aid the researcher in the research, a formal interview questionnaire was used as the main research tool. The approach involved conducting intensive face-to-face interviews, allowing for a thorough examination of the topic at hand. The interview questions were separated into three sections.

Part I focused on the difficulties encountered by teachers working in overcrowded classrooms, particularly in teaching as well as on classroom management. Teachers got a chance through open-ended questions to express their experiences and opinions about the hardships they encountered within such classrooms.

Part II examined how teachers approached strategies to manage classroom congestion. This part aimed to reveal the adaptive methodologies and strategies that teachers employed to manage their classrooms effectively despite difficult circumstances.

Part III emphasized stories of resilience and accomplishment anchored in the personal stories of teachers as they worked through and overcame the challenges of overcrowded classrooms. Through this narrative strategy, teachers shared stories and results that reveal their determination in the face of adversity.

Field data were collected through face-to-face interviews, and the researcher used audio recordings to capture the words exchanged accurately. The questions asked were derived from the experiences of the participants within their classroom teaching careers in overcrowded classrooms to elicit a rich exchange of both challenges and solutions. Through this means, a deep understanding of the complex issues of classroom congestion as well as the creative outcomes of teachers, was achieved.

Procedure

The researcher began by requesting a formal permission letter from the principal of Quirino National High School. Secondly, upon being granted permission, the researcher worked with the school administrators in selecting appropriate participants. The targeted participants included Junior High School teachers currently handling advisory classes that are over the DepEd policy standard class size.

Upon identifying the participants, they underwent a series of face-to-face interviews aimed at probing their lived experiences within overcrowded classrooms. The interviews will be conducted semi-structured to enable detailed discussions and offer some room for maneuverability in exploring pertinent issues that may arise during the interaction. To preserve the integrity of the information gathered, all interviews were transcribed verbatim. This ensures that the voices of the participants are well represented and that no information is lost or changed during transcription.

Lastly, after data collection, transcripts were examined using thematic analysis to determine the main themes and patterns concerning teacher resilience in overcrowded classrooms. This is a thorough process that aims to provide credible insights into the challenges confronting teachers in such settings.

Data Analysis

To get the results treated, thematic analysis was utilized. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis emphasizes the identification, analysis, and reporting of patterns and themes within the data. It organizes and describes all data in detail. There are six (6) steps covered in thematic analysis:

Familiarizing with the data. In this step, the researcher will read and re-read the data to become familiar with what the data needs and pay attention to the patterns that occur. The researcher must complete data collection.

Generating initial codes and themes (Initial themes). The researcher generates the initial codes by documenting where and how patterns occur. This happens through data reduction, where the researcher collapses data into labels to create categories for more efficient analysis. Data complication is also completed here. This involves the researcher making inferences about what the codes mean.

Searching for themes (Clustered Themes). The researcher combines codes into overarching themes that accurately depict the data. It is important to develop themes that describe precisely what the theme means, even if it does not fit. The researcher also describes what is missing from the analysis.

Reviewing themes. In this step, the researcher examines how the themes support the data and the overarching theoretical perspective.

If the analysis appears incomplete, the researcher must revisit the data to identify what needs to be added.

Defining and naming themes (Relevant Themes). The researcher needs to define each theme, specifying which aspects of the data are being captured and what is interesting about the themes.

In the final step, when the researcher writes the report, they decide which themes make meaningful contributions to understanding the data.

Ethical Considerations

The necessary processes for performing the research must follow the required protocols and ethical concerns. It is to guarantee that the research was carried out appropriately by monitoring the following throughout the data collection procedure:

Informed Consent. The researcher will send a letter to key informants asking for their consent to be part of the study. The researcher will insist that they will only be able to become participants after their approval. If participants do not meet the study's conditions and interview procedures, the researchers will continue selecting other participants who are willing to participate.

Confidentiality. The researcher would assure the responders and anybody else engaged in the data collection process that their answers and identities would be kept private. To safeguard the participants' safety and comfort, the researcher will not reveal their names. It is also critical to eliminate prejudice and anger directed at the responders.

Risk of Harm. The interviewee must be oriented on how the interview will commence. There must be an assurance that the area where an interview is safe from any risks and harm

Trustworthiness of the Study. This section will elaborate on the trustworthiness of the study to assure the accuracy and transparency of the results through the following indicators:

Credibility. The study will commence in President Quirino National High School,

President Quirino, Sultan Kudarat. The researcher will ensure that the interview space is suitable and conducive for both the researchers and the key participants in the study. The researchers will spend one hour saturating the data. The respondents will validate the results of this study. However, for the data gathered to be more useful, it needs to be linked to the source of the information to be reliable.

Dependability. The data from this study will be stored on a flash drive and Google Drive, serving as a backup to secure the raw data gathered. Hence, this will be used if a problem arises during the study. Taking notes is a straightforward tool that does not reveal participants' unintentional reactions. Significantly, audio recordings are another way to gather and store interview data. The participant's permission is required to utilize either of these two forms. It will ensure that the data gathered is compiled entirely by researchers and will not miss any participants' information.

Confirmability. The study's findings will be reviewed by the selected members. Its purpose is to validate the research. The researchers would also want to expose the findings to the community since this would give them information on their lived experiences. By delivering an interview transcript or providing an explanation of the analytical results, member checking is a technique for assuring participant agreement.

Transferability. The result of this study adds to existing knowledge and offers a foundation for continued inquiry and discovery.

Furthermore, this study is particularly useful for researchers and scholars interested in the topic. They may use the study's findings and relate them to their own experiences. It might make it easier for researchers to access the ideas and feelings of study subjects, enabling them to comprehend the significance that different people place on their experiences.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the thematic analysis of public school teachers' experiences in congested classrooms. The analysis follows Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase procedure, identifying and discussing key themes and sub-themes (clusters) supported by verbatim responses from the participants. The discussion connects these findings to the broader literature and the study's objectives.

Presentation of the Findings

The researcher reviewed the interview transcript, and the analysis revealed patterns across the interviews, identifying developing themes based on repetitive responses provided by the five participants.

The emerging themes were (a) Challenges of Overcrowding in Teaching and Classroom Management, (b) Adaptive Teaching and Management Strategies, (c) Teacher Well-being and Coping Mechanisms, (d) Collaboration and Support Systems, and (e) Resilience and Professional Growth. The themes were based on repetitive or similar responses from each of the interviewees.

Theme 1: Challenges of Overcrowding in Teaching and Classroom Management.

The first relevant theme navigated the multifaceted challenges that teachers face in managing and teaching in overcrowded classrooms.

The difficulties are not limited to physical discomfort but extend to behavioral management and the overall effectiveness of instruction. The following clusters detail the primary obstacles that hinder teachers' ability to create conducive learning environments. There are three identified clustered themes: Physical Constraints and Space Limitations, Behavioral and Management Challenges, and Impact on Teaching Effectiveness.

Key informants identified disparities in spaces that hindered their task as educators. This gap caused severe effects on the teaching and learning process. Key informants said that,

"Lack of adequate seating and ventilation causes students to be less engaged in all class activities."

(Lack of adequate seating and ventilation causes students to be less engaged in all class activities.) KI-1

"Restricted movement, limited group work, harder to monitor behavior."

(Restricted movement, limited group work, harder to monitor behavior.) KI-1

Additionally, some of the key informants identified disparities in spaces as a factor in the teaching and learning process. Teachers identified this as a factor contributing to less interaction during teaching. This caused them to apply strategies and coping to meet and serve what is best for the learners. Key informants added that,

"Classroom layout becomes more about survival than learning; there's little room to move, interact, or explore."

(Classroom layout becomes more about survival than learning; there's little room to move, interact, or explore.) KI-3

"It's difficult to conduct kinesthetic or role-play activities."

(It's difficult to conduct kinesthetic or role-play activities.) KI-5

"I have to minimize physical materials or large visual displays, limiting the depth of explanation."

(I have to minimize physical materials or large visual displays, limiting the depth of explanation.) KI-6

Teachers identified classroom congestion as one of the main reasons why teachers tend to experience Behavioral and Management conflicts in their day-to-day duties. This caused them to experience minor issues, which then escalated due to classroom congestion. Key informants said that,

"It's hard to maintain order during transitions. Simply collecting papers becomes a logistical issue."

(It's hard to maintain order during transitions. Simply collecting papers becomes a logistical issue.) KI-3

"I often repeat instructions multiple times because students at the back can't hear or get distracted."

(I often repeat instructions multiple times because students at the back can't hear or get distracted.) KI-4

Key informants identified congested classrooms as the factor why teachers cannot perform their duty and causes limited ability to intervene quickly during conflicts or off-task behavior, and this further contributes to teachers' stress and fatigue. Key informants also added that,

"I'm forced to choose between addressing disruptions or finishing the day's lesson."

(I'm forced to choose between addressing disruptions or finishing the day's lesson.) KI-5

"The lack of mobility restricts my ability to intervene quickly during conflicts or off-task behaviors."

(The lack of mobility restricts my ability to intervene quickly during conflicts or off-task behaviors.) KI-6

".....there is Limited individual attention, time management issues, and higher stress & fatigue." KI-6

The two intervening challenges, related to the physical and behavioral aspects of the environment and the students, directly undermine teachers' ability to deliver lessons effectively. Insufficient spaces and increased distractions affect the opportunities for individualized instruction and active participation, which ultimately may affect students' learning outcomes. Key informants said that,

"Teachers are unable to immediately meet their students' learning needs."

(Teachers are unable to immediately meet their students' learning needs.) KI-1

"A lack of space has a significant impact on how lessons are delivered."

(A lack of space has a significant impact on how lessons are delivered.) KI-1

Teachers noticed some misbehaviors from the students. These challenges are commonly validated through their reactions, participation, and interactions during class. Key informants added that,

"Students complain about discomfort, which affects their mood and limits participation."

(Students complain about discomfort, which affects their mood and limits participation.) KI-4

"I noticed that there is less student participation due to limited space."

(I noticed that there is less student participation due to limited space.) KI-2

Theme 2: Adaptive Teaching and Management Strategies

Despite the reality that teachers faced classroom challenges that exceeded the number of standard sizes stipulated by the Department of Education (DepEd), teachers can exhibit a remarkable spirit of adaptability and ingenuity. This theme strongly highlights the various strategies teachers employed to establish homeostasis in engagement and manage their classrooms effectively, ensuring that learning continues despite constraints. This theme was illustrated through three cluster themes: 1) Instructional Adaptations and Engagement Techniques, 2) Classroom Management Practices, and 3) Promoting Inclusivity and Self-Learning. The key informants supported that,

"I usually administer and continue to use group work, maximizing available space, and setting clear routines."

(I usually administer and continue to use group work, maximizing available space, and setting clear routines.) KI-2

"I began setting learning stations to manage the number of students engaging in tasks."

(I began setting learning stations to manage the number of students engaging in tasks.) KI-3

Similarly, teachers learned some initiatives to deliver lessons at their best. They began to adopt and innovate some strategies like Flexible grouping, using some ICT technologies, and chopping of lessons for them to deliver the lesson in a timely and accurate. Key informants supported that,

"I utilized Flexible grouping and rotating activities so students remain active even though they are congested."

(I utilized Flexible grouping and rotating activities so students remain active even though they are congested.) KI-4

"I apply Lessons sometimes in a form of modular form, and they are chunked to ensure core learning."

(I apply Lessons sometimes in the form of modules, and they are chunked to ensure core learning.) KI-5

"I usually incorporate quick drills, pair work, and ICT-based resources for me to deliver lessons properly and accurately."

(I usually incorporate quick drills, pair work, and ICT-based resources for me to deliver lessons properly and accurately," KI_6

Additionally, the Teachers adjusted their methods and significantly employed a range of instructional methods, some of which are group work, learning stations, and technology integration, to maximize and enhance student participation and engagement, even when resources and space are limited. They supported that,

"I set clear rules and routines for clarity of discussion and use proximity control, and engage students actively."

(I set clear rules and routines for clarity of discussion and use proximity control, and engage students actively.) KI-2

"I commonly make Use of the praise and reward systems to reinforce positive behavior to establish control and motivation."

(I commonly make Use of the praise and reward systems to reinforce positive behavior to establish control and motivation.) KI-3

In promoting Inclusivity and self-directed learning, it is crucial to prioritize through differentiated instruction, peer support, and the use of digital resources.

These practices and innovations help ensure that every student, regardless of ability or background, has the opportunity to succeed and has the chance to excel. The participants of the study said that,

"I noticed that maintaining a smooth classroom environment and ensuring equal opportunity significantly increased their performance and scholastic records."

(I noticed that maintaining a smooth classroom environment and ensuring equal opportunity significantly increased their performance and scholastic records.) KI-1

".....Differentiated instruction, peer support, and online resources significantly affect students' performance and increase motivation."

(Differentiated instruction, peer support, and online resources significantly affect students' performance and increase motivation.) KI-2

"I assign group leaders to assist struggling learners to increase leadership skills among them."

(I assign group leaders to assist struggling learners to increase leadership skills among them.) Ki-3

Theme 3: Teacher Well-being and Coping Mechanisms

Teaching in congested classrooms poses substantial challenges to educators, including their emotional and physical well-being. The overwhelming number of students exceeding the standard size of students as stipulated in the department can lead to increased stress levels, burnout, and feelings of inadequacy as teachers struggle to provide individualized attention and support. This theme explores the numerous personal impacts of such congestion, highlighting the emotional fatigue and mental strain that arise from these disparities. This theme was illustrated in 2 cluster themes, such as 1. Emotional and Physical Strain, and 2. Coping and Resilience Strategies.

The key Informants claimed that,

"There are significantly increased stress levels, physical exhaustion, and mental strain from this congestion we've experienced."

(There are significantly increased stress levels, physical exhaustion, and mental strain from this congestion we've experienced.) KI-2

"I noticed some physical symptoms that I think originated from the stress due to this congestion inside the classroom, there is a manifestation of Chronic fatigue and recurring back pain."

(I noticed some physical symptoms that I think originated from the stress due to this congestion inside the classroom, there is a manifestation of Chronic fatigue and recurring back pain.) KI-3

"My voice was strained from speaking louder over the noise. This made me feel weaker, unmotivated, and unproductive."

(My voice was strained from speaking louder over the noise. This made me feel weaker, unmotivated, and unproductive.) KI-6.

This congestion harms teachers, and even their families are affected. Since they are overusing their body and voices for the whole day, they feel so tired and need to rest when they get home; by this, there is less time spent with their families. Key informant 5 shared that,

"By this prevalent problem, I need to cut back on family time and rest earlier to catch up on work for tomorrow."

(Due to this prevalent problem, I need to cut back on family time and rest earlier to catch up on work for tomorrow.) (Teacher 5)

To significantly address these challenges, teachers' innovation skills in a form of engaging in self-care, seeking professional growth and development, and relying on peer support. These coping strategies help them maintain and enhance their resilience, enabling them to continue performing their roles effectively as the second parents of their students. Participants stated that,

"Enthusiasm and commitment significantly lessen the negative effects of classroom congestion; attending training and seminars increased our knowledge and motivation."

(Enthusiasm and commitment significantly lessen the negative effects of classroom congestion; attending training and seminars increased our knowledge and motivation.) KI-1)

"I learned to practice self-care, going back to our hobbies during weekends, sought peer support in times of need, and continued professional development."

(I learned to practice self-care, going back to our hobbies during weekends, sought peer support in times of need, and continued professional development.) KI-2

"Reflect through journaling to track what worked." KI-3

"As a newly hired teacher, I always seek mentorship from veteran teachers who helped me a lot in dealing with this type of classroom."

(As a newly hired teacher, I always seek mentorship from veteran teachers who helped me a lot in dealing with this type of classroom.) KI-4

Theme 4: Collaboration and Support Systems

Effectively handling the challenges exhibited by overcrowded classrooms requires cooperation and assistance from administrators as well as other educators. Collaboration and resource sharing become even more crucial as educators face the everyday challenges of large class sizes. Together, educators can create creative approaches that not only meet the needs of each student but also make the classroom livelier and more interesting. By promoting a sense of community among educators, this cooperative approach facilitates the sharing of best practices, resources, and ideas that can significantly improve student performance. This theme was clustered into Peer and Administrative Collaboration, which is identified as having a great impact on teachers' welfare. Key informants said that,

"I believe that Stakeholder collaboration is essential to achieving high-quality education."

(I believe that Stakeholder collaboration is essential to achieving high-quality education.) KI-1

"I noticed that Collective problem-solving, team and peer support, data sharing, and co-planning lessons lessen the difficulties I encountered, especially in addressing the prevalent issue."

(I noticed that Collective problem-solving, team and peer support, data sharing, and co-planning lessons lessen the difficulties I encountered, especially in addressing the prevalent issue.) KI-2

Key informant 6 also added that,

"I feel that teacher support group, peer mentoring, and SLAC sessions are a good strategy for discussion, and they develop mental health."

(I feel that teacher support group, peer mentoring, and SLAC sessions are a good strategy for discussion, and they develop mental health.) KI-6

Theme 5: Resilience and Professional Growth

Teachers show incredible fortitude and a steadfast dedication to professional development in the face of hardship. For the benefit of their students, they find ways to adjust and endure in the face of scarce resources, changing policies, or unforeseen disruptions. They reframe challenges as chances to evaluate their work, try out novel approaches, and create networks of supportive colleagues rather than giving in to setbacks. This proactive approach turns challenges into worthwhile educational opportunities that deepen their commitment to their work.

This theme emphasizes how teachers transform obstacles into opportunities for creativity, frequently redefining what constitutes academic success. It was clustered into 3 themes, such as: 1. Innovative Strategies and Transforming Challenges, 2. Personal and Professional Development. Key informants supported that,

"Some initiatives, like implemented peer tutoring, mentoring, and sharing of expertise, pose a greater help to us and provide more learning."

(Some initiatives, like implemented peer tutoring, mentoring, and sharing of expertise, pose a greater help to us and provide more learning.) KI-2

"We've adapted lessons that are inclusive to include student-created content to boost learning and holistic development."

(We've adapted lessons that are inclusive to include student-created content to boost learning and holistic development.) KI-6

The lived experiences of educators in congested classrooms foster a spirit of adaptability, empathy, and improved teaching skills. Teachers reflect significantly on how these challenges have contributed to their professional growth. These realizations lead to the conclusion that educators build resilience and coping strategies in themselves to continue rendering quality teaching.

"I've learned to build adaptability to the situation, creativity in new teaching skills, and empathy with my co-educators."

(I've learned to build adaptability to the situation, creativity in new teaching skills, and empathy with my co-educators.) KI-1

"By exploring more strategies, I noticed a developed and Improved classroom management and innovative teaching strategies."

(By exploring more strategies, I noticed a developed and Improved classroom management and innovative teaching strategies.) KI-2

"I became more emotionally intelligent in all situations and observant of what's happening, and by this, I developed and learned to offer solutions."

(I became more emotionally intelligent in all situations and observant of what's happening, and by this, I developed and learned to offer solutions.) KI-3

"I developed and Learned to prioritize effectively among tasks, chop it into smaller chunks, and avoid unnecessary stress." KI-4

"I gained confidence in using alternative teaching tools and technology and supplement what is best for teaching. There is a good improvement in the scholastic records of my students." KI-6

In congested classrooms, overall success extends beyond traditional academic metrics to encompass minor yet meaningful accomplishments that contribute to a more vibrant learning environment. This early morning viewpoint highlights the importance of students being more actively involved in their education and taking charge of their learning process. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of student collaboration by motivating them to cooperate, exchange knowledge, and develop their social skills. Teachers can design more effective and inclusive learning experiences that meet the various needs of every student by redefining success in this way. Key informants added that,

"Success was notably present when students were engaged, performing, motivated, and respectful despite challenges in space inside the classroom."

(Success was notably present when students were engaged, performing, motivated, and respectful despite challenges in space inside the classroom.) KI-1

"I noticed and identified Small wins that were manifested in their active participation in discussions, notably, there was an improved behavior."

(I noticed and identified Small wins that were manifested in their active participation in discussions, notably, there was an improved behavior.) KI-2

"Fewer disruptions and more collaboration were observed during classes." KI-4

"I observed that Students are proud of what they learned and they tend to ask more questions about the topic, a manifestation of ignited curiosity."

(I observed that Students are proud of what they learned and they tend to ask more questions about the topic, a manifestation of ignited curiosity.) KI-6

Relevant Theme 1: Challenges of Overcrowding in Teaching and Classroom Management

Classroom management is a critical component of successful teaching. It encompasses a range of strategies and techniques used by educators to create an organized, productive, and respectful learning environment (Bonna, 2023). In implementing effective Classroom management, Teachers identified physical limitations inside the classrooms, such as cramped seating arrangements and poor ventilation, as one of the major concerns that restrict their ability and hinder them from moving around and monitoring student behavior effectively. Dealing with and managing a large number of students also demands extra time and effort to maintain discipline, leading to constant monitoring with a state of alertness and fatigue.

In addition, due to physical constraints, behavioral issues in congested classrooms often intensify. Teachers observed that students become more distracted and disruptive when there is little space to work comfortably. Similarly, Vakili et al. (2024) supported that an excessive number of students can create an overwhelming atmosphere in which teachers struggle to engage effectively with each individual, resulting in diminished attention and engagement from educators.

The challenges of overcrowding highlight how these physical, behavioral, and logistical barriers complicate effective teaching. This manifests in a need to examine classroom congestion not just as a facility problem but as a critical factor cultivating and impairing teacher well-being and instructional quality. Critical consideration and understanding of this theme emphasize the urgency of addressing these debilitating issues to alleviate the burden and create a promising place for teachers and students.

Relevant Theme 2: Adaptive Teaching and Management Strategies

Despite these identified gaps, teachers showed a significant and remarkable sense of adaptability in their daily practices. Adaptive teaching has been construed as a response to the realization that adaptive teaching cannot be scripted or guided by any particular model of instruction (Dumont, 2018; Randi, 2022). This supported the creation of flexible seating arrangements within the classroom, the setup of group work activities, and the implementation of modular interventions to make learning more manageable for students. Integrating ICT tools was another promising and creative approach to enhancing student engagement, even in limited physical spaces. The integration of Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) will assist teachers in meeting the global requirement to replace traditional teaching methods with technology-based teaching and learning tools and facilities (Jadhav et al., 2022).

Teachers' willingness and motivation to try new educational innovations and share them with co-educators demonstrates their untiring commitment to continuous improvement in the field. These best practices ensure that all students continue to receive sufficient and meaningful learning experiences, despite the structural challenges that limit one-on-one interaction. Taken together, this theme underscores that teachers' ability to adapt is central to their resilience. Resilience generally refers to optimism, bouncing back from adversity, or bettering oneself through challenges (Mullen et al., 2021). These resilience strategies showed that teachers played a crucial role in overcoming structural barriers. This insight affirms the Resilience-Building Theory's concept that resilience is strongly enhanced through context-specific responses and resourcefulness of teachers, which directly benefit students' learning.

Relevant Theme 3: Teacher Well-being and Coping Mechanisms

Teachers repeatedly described how the stress of overcrowded classrooms affects their physical and mental health, as well as their personal lives. Many reported experiencing voice strain, fatigue, and emotional exhaustion due to the extra effort needed to manage large groups. These demands often extend beyond work hours, leaving teachers with little time for rest and family responsibilities. Teacher coping methods are becoming more widely recognized as a key factor in determining teacher effectiveness (Rajesh et al., 2022).

In response, teachers have developed various coping mechanisms to protect their well-being. Aulén et al. (2021) suggested that using a limited number of coping strategies and problem-focused strategies, in addition to emotion-focused strategies, might be beneficial for teacher well-being. Some practice self-care through hobbies, rest, or reflection, while others seek professional development opportunities to improve their teaching strategies. Furthermore, basic coping strategies are used to categorize how people react to or handle stress (Rabenu et al., 2016; Zewude & Hercz, 2021).

Overall, this theme illustrates that while overcrowding poses significant threats to well-being, teachers' coping strategies enable them

to maintain their commitment to their work. It shows that resilience is not a static trait but an active process requiring personal effort and supportive conditions. This reinforces the study's argument that teacher well-being must be prioritized alongside instructional goals.

Relevant Theme 4: Collaboration and Support Systems

A strong spirit of collaboration emerged as a vital element against the daily stresses caused by overcrowding. Key informants identified and stressed that peer mentoring, sharing of resources, and supportive school administration help them manage large classes more effectively. These interactions of coping strategies provide a big and practical solution that supports camaraderie, alleviating feelings of isolation among them. One factor widely acknowledged to facilitate school and classroom improvement is a strong collaborative culture among teachers. As such, teachers are expected to work in teacher teams, collaborate closely with colleagues, co-construct classroom practices, and thereby strengthen trust relationships within the team (Richter & Pant, 2016; Kolleck et al., 2021).

Key Participants emphasized that regular discussions with colleagues and sharing of brilliant ideas create a door of opportunities to share best practices in teaching and classroom management tactics. By working together, teachers can challenge structural constraints and advocate for changes that improve classroom conditions. Finally, Jortveit and Kovač (2022) claimed that Educational professionals who are willing to come closer to one another in terms of their practice and professional identities are better equipped to succeed in co-teaching situations. This theme demonstrates that resilience is strengthened through strong support systems and professional relationships. Teachers' reliance on collaboration shows that resilience is both an individual and collective process. This insight highlights the importance of fostering a culture of mutual support and shared responsibility within schools.

Relevant Theme 5: Resilience and Professional Growth

The informants opened powerful stories of how they combat adversity into opportunities for professional growth and resilience. Many of them described small wins, such as improved student engagement or better classroom behavior, as meaningful successes. By cultivating a strong spirit of resilience and perspective, they managed to be agile even in rainy or sunny circumstances. Beyond personal mindset shifts, they also utilize challenges as their weapon for innovation. They adapt their teaching to fit the constraints of their classrooms. This innovation was fitted with Resilience Building Theory, which defines resilience as the ability to recover from difficulties, adapt to changes, and continue progressing despite facing challenges (Rachmad, 2022).

Finally, this theme identifies that resilience is transformative. Teachers can embrace this as a weapon not only to survive difficult situations but also as a door of opportunity, benefiting their learners and the broader school community context. This synthesis supports the idea that resilience is an ongoing process rooted in agency, optimism, and context-sensitive responses to challenges. Based on the idea that development involves changes in individuals' adaptive capacity to meet their needs over time, the changes that occur in the second half of life require effort to adapt to the new reality (Mayordomo et al., 2021). And this reality is that there are always disparities along our path as educators of the new generation, and we need to strengthen our resolve and cultivate a spirit of resilience.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the issue of congested classrooms poses a serious problem that has a negative impact on both the standard of instruction and the welfare of teachers. Even while educators demonstrate incredible fortitude in the face of these difficulties, it is essential to acknowledge that they shouldn't bear this burden alone. Schools can improve teachers' ability to adapt and succeed by creating supportive settings and allocating sufficient resources.

Furthermore, as such, school administrators, stakeholders, parents, and the community must share responsibility to ease the problem of classroom congestion. Both teachers and students can benefit from a supportive learning environment created by implementing systemic solutions, such as smaller class sizes, technology, ICT utilization, and professional development opportunities. We can tailor creative solutions that guarantee teachers are prepared for success and that students get the top-notch education they are entitled to by working together and communicating peacefully. Ultimately, resolving these issues is crucial to creating a thriving educational environment where instructors and students can flourish.

To promote teachers' well-being, encourage and support programs that foster mental health, self-care, and work-life balance, thereby sustaining their resilience.

For the Professional Development of teachers, provide continuous training focused on managing large classes, differentiated instruction, and innovative teaching strategies.

To promote Collaboration and Support Systems for teachers, institutionalize peer mentoring, teacher learning communities, and wellness initiatives to strengthen support networks.

To craft Policy and Infrastructure, expand classrooms, and hire additional teachers to align with class-size standards and reduce overcrowding.

For future research, conduct further studies on the long-term impact of overcrowding on teacher retention and student achievement. Broader research can guide policy reforms and practical interventions.

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