



## Teaching in an Inclusive Environment: An examination of stress and its impact to Teachers' Well-Being

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### Abstract

This study investigated stress levels, coping strategies, and the effects of stress among 122 general education teachers managing inclusive classes at Mandaue City Central School, using a complete enumeration approach. Employing a descriptive correlational design, teachers completed a survey assessing their profile characteristics, perceived stress, coping strategies, and overall well-being. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's  $r$  correlations. Results indicated that the majority of respondents were experienced female teachers with advanced degrees; however, more than half lacked formal training in inclusive education. Teachers reported moderate overall stress levels, with primary stressors identified as teaching students with special needs and managing excessive workloads. Coping strategies were moderately employed, with time management and peer support being the most frequently utilized approaches, while professional counseling was the least used. The impact of stress was also moderate, particularly manifesting as feelings of being overwhelmed and exhausted due to workload demands. Correlational analyses revealed a weak but statistically significant positive relationship between stress levels and the use of coping strategies, as well as a moderate positive correlation between stress levels and their impact. Based on these findings, the study recommends implementing a tailored intervention plan to address these specific challenges and to guide educational leaders in enhancing teacher well-being and effectiveness within inclusive classroom settings.

**Keywords:** Special Education, Coping Strategies, Teacher Stress, Well-being, Descriptive-Correlation, Mandaue City, Cebu, Philippines

### Introduction

Inclusive education represents a transformative approach in modern educational systems, fundamentally reshaping how schools address diverse learning needs. This pedagogical paradigm extends beyond the traditional integration of students with special needs, encompassing a broader vision where educational institutions adapt to accommodate all learners, regardless of their physical, cognitive, social, or emotional characteristics. The evolution of inclusive education



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reflects a significant shift from segregated special education models to more comprehensive, integrated learning environments that celebrate and support student diversity (Katsarou et al., 2023).

### *Implementation of Inclusive Education in the Philippines*

The Philippines has embraced inclusive education through progressive legislation and policy frameworks. The Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 marked a pivotal point in this journey, mandating schools to provide inclusive learning environments. Implementation varies across regions, with some schools employing specialized inclusive education teachers while others rely on general education teachers who receive supplementary training in inclusive practices (Symaco & Bustos, 2022). This dual approach has created a complex educational landscape where theoretical ideals often confront practical limitations.

### *Challenges Faced by General Education Teachers*

General education teachers in inclusive settings encounter complex challenges that extend beyond conventional pedagogical concerns. The requirement to simultaneously address diverse learning needs while maintaining educational standards for all students creates significant instructional complexity. Teachers must navigate the intricate balance between differentiated instruction and standardized curriculum requirements, often without adequate support systems or resources (Woloshyn et al., 2023). The challenge is particularly acute in urban settings where class sizes tend to be larger and resources more stretched.

### *The Need for Specialized Training and Support*

The growing prevalence of inclusive classrooms has highlighted critical gaps in teacher preparation and ongoing professional development. While policies mandate inclusive education, the infrastructure for teacher training has not kept pace with classroom realities. This disconnect manifests in teachers' reported feelings of inadequacy when addressing complex learning needs and managing diverse classroom dynamics (Ortan et al., 2021). The need for specialized training extends beyond basic pedagogical skills to encompass psychological preparation and stress management strategies.

### *Consequences of Inadequate Preparation*

The impact of insufficient preparation for inclusive education manifests in multiple dimensions of teacher well-being and professional effectiveness. Teachers often experience elevated stress levels, diminished self-efficacy, and increased risk of professional burnout. These challenges are particularly evident in settings where support systems are limited or absent, creating a cycle of reduced teaching effectiveness and compromised student outcomes (Woloshyn et al., 2023). The situation at Mandaue City Central School exemplifies these systemic challenges, where teachers report significant stress related to managing diverse learning needs with limited resources.



## *Recommendations for Improvement*

Addressing the challenges of inclusive education requires a complex approach that combines systematic professional development, resource allocation, and institutional support. Research suggests the need for structured mentoring programs, regular professional development opportunities, and the establishment of collaborative networks among teachers (Ahn et al., 2022). Additionally, schools must develop comprehensive support systems that include specialized resource personnel, appropriate teaching materials, and mechanisms for regular teacher feedback and assessment (Ortan et al., 2021). These improvements should be implemented within a framework that recognizes both the immediate and long-term needs of teachers in inclusive settings.

## **Research Questions**

This study explored the relationship between occupational stress, coping mechanisms, and professional outcomes among general education teachers managing inclusive classrooms at Mandaue City Central School during the academic year 2024-2025. The research aimed to develop an evidence-based intervention framework to support teachers in inclusive educational settings.

### *Primary Research Questions*

1. What are the demographic and professional characteristics of general education teachers managing inclusive classrooms, specifically regarding:
  - Demographic variables (age, gender)
  - Professional qualifications (educational attainment, length of service)
  - Professional development (specialized courses completed)
  - Inclusive education preparation (training received, knowledge of current practices)
2. To what extent do teachers experience occupational stress while managing inclusive classrooms?
3. What coping strategies do teachers employ to manage work-related stress, and what is the frequency and perceived effectiveness of these strategies?
4. What are the manifestations and extent of stress-related impacts on teachers' professional performance and well-being?
5. What relationships exist between:
  - a. Teachers' reported stress levels and their utilization of coping strategies
  - b. Teachers' stress levels and observed professional/personal impacts
6. What evidence-based interventions can be developed based on the study's findings to support teachers in inclusive educational settings?



## *Research Hypotheses*

The following null hypotheses were tested at  $\alpha = 0.05$ :

H<sub>0</sub>1: There is no significant relationship between teachers' reported stress levels and their implementation of coping strategies.

H<sub>0</sub>2: There is no significant relationship between teachers' stress levels and observed impacts on their professional performance and well-being.

## *Alternative Hypotheses*

H<sub>1</sub>1: A significant relationship exists between teachers' reported stress levels and their implementation of coping strategies.

H<sub>1</sub>2: A significant relationship exists between teachers' stress levels and observed impacts on their professional performance and well-being.

The findings from these research questions will enlighten the development of targeted interventions to support teachers in inclusive educational environments, with implications for educational policy and practice.

## *Objective*

This study aimed to explore the relationship between teaching-related stressors and the well-being of inclusive teachers in Mandaue City Central School. By examining the specific challenges faced by these teachers and their current coping mechanisms, the research seeks to develop an evidence-based intervention plan. This plan focused on reducing stress, enhancing teacher well-being, and ultimately improving the quality of inclusive education provided in these schools.

Understanding and addressing the stress experienced by teachers in inclusive settings is crucial not only for the well-being of educators but also for the success of inclusive education initiatives. By supporting teachers effectively, we can create more positive and productive learning environments that benefit all students, regardless of their diverse needs (Hu et al., 2024; Toquero, 2021).

## **Methods**

### *Study Design*

The research design centered on a systematic investigation of the interconnections between teaching stressors, coping mechanisms, and well-being among inclusive education teachers at Mandaue City Central School. Following the Input-Process-Output (IPO) framework, the study structured its methodology into three distinct components. The input phase focused on gathering teacher demographics and assessing stress levels. The process phase encompassed comprehensive data collection and analytical procedures, while the output phase aimed to generate evidence-based recommendations for teacher support. This study employed a descriptive correlational design, which proved particularly effective in examining the relationships between teaching-related stressors, coping strategies, and teacher well-being (Kotronoulas et al., 2023; Mohajan, 2020). To





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ensure comprehensive data collection, the study utilized complete enumeration, engaging all 122 inclusive education teachers at the school. This methodological approach enabled a thorough examination of the population characteristics and the relationships between variables, enhancing the reliability and replicability of the findings. The design's systematic nature facilitated the development of practical, data-driven solutions to support inclusive education teachers while maintaining scientific rigor. This methodological framework ensured that the research findings would be both academically sound and practically applicable in developing targeted interventions for improving teacher well-being in inclusive classroom settings.

### *Materials and Procedures*

This study utilized a comprehensive Teacher Survey Questionnaire designed to gather data from educators working with students in inclusive settings at Mandaue City Central School. The research environment, situated at LL Ouano St., Centro Mandaue City, Cebu, served as an ideal location due to its historical significance as the oldest public school in Mandaue City (established 1904) and its current enrollment of 3,588 students in the 2024-2025 school year. The study engaged 122 inclusive education teachers through complete enumeration, representing all grade levels from Kindergarten through Grade 6, including non-advisory teachers (Pullis, 1992; Casungcad et al., 2024; Adigun & Mngomezulu, 2022).

The research instrument consisted of four main sections: a Profile Questionnaire collecting demographic and professional information, a Perceived Stress Levels Survey utilizing a 5-point Likert scale to assess various stressors, a Coping Strategies Survey evaluating stress management methods, and a Well-Being Assessment examining the overall impact of stress on teachers' professional and personal lives. The questionnaire was adapted specifically for this study, incorporating elements from established instruments such as the Pullis Inventory of Teacher Stress (Pullis, 1992) and recent research by Casungcad et al. (2024) and Adigun & Mngomezulu (2022).

The data collection process followed three distinct stages. In the preliminary stage, the researchers obtained necessary permissions from institutional authorities, including the Dean of Graduate Studies, College of Education, and the Mandaue City Division Office of the Department of Education. The data-gathering stage involved distributing questionnaires through both in-person and online methods via Google Forms, with researchers providing guidance as needed. During the post-data gathering stage, the collected information was systematically organized, tabulated, and analyzed using appropriate statistical methods. Throughout the process, strict confidentiality protocols were maintained, with participants receiving detailed information about the study's objectives and their rights through written informed consent forms. The school's diverse student population and experienced teaching staff provided a rich environment for examining the relationships between teaching-related stressors, coping strategies, and teacher well-being in inclusive education settings.



## *Data Collection and Analysis*

Data collection followed a systematic three-phase approach to ensure comprehensive data gathering. The preliminary phase involved securing necessary authorizations from key institutional stakeholders, including the Dean of Graduate Studies, College of Education Dean, and research adviser. Following these initial approvals, permission was obtained from the Mandaue City Division Office of the Department of Education (DepEd) and the school principal. Each participant received a written informed consent form outlining confidentiality measures and their right to withdraw from the study.

The data gathering phase employed a mixed-mode approach, utilizing both traditional paper-based questionnaires and digital data collection through Google Forms. This hybrid approach maximized response rates while accommodating participants' preferences and circumstances. Statistical analysis was conducted using IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), employing both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics included frequency counts, percentages, weighted means, and standard deviations to analyze demographic characteristics and assess average levels of perceived stress and coping strategies. The Pearson  $r$  correlation coefficient was utilized to examine relationships between perceived stress levels, coping strategies, and overall well-being scores.

The scoring procedure utilized a 5-point Likert scale across three main assessment areas: Perceived Stress Levels Survey, Coping Strategies Survey, and Well-Being Assessment. For the Perceived Stress Levels Survey, scores ranged from 1 (Very Low) to 5 (Very High), with higher scores indicating greater perceived stress. The Coping Strategies Survey measured frequency of strategy use from 1 (Not Utilized) to 5 (Highly Utilized). The Well-Being Assessment evaluated teachers' overall well-being on a scale from 1 (Very Low) to 5 (Very High). Before distribution, the adapted survey questionnaire underwent expert review to ensure content and face validity, as supported by previous research methodologies (Pullis, 1992; Casungcad et al., 2024; Adigun & Mngomezulu, 2022). This comprehensive approach to data collection and analysis enabled thorough examination of the relationships between teaching-related stressors, coping mechanisms, and teacher well-being in inclusive education settings.

## **Results**

The following are the findings of this study examining the levels of stress experienced by teachers at Mandaue City Central School when handling inclusive classes, the coping strategies they employ, and the overall impact of stress. The analysis is structured based on data collected from 122 teachers via a survey questionnaire.

### *Demographic Profile of Respondents*

The following are the demographic profiles of the respondents, including age, gender, educational attainment, length of service, and completion of professional development training.



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- **Gender and Age Distribution:** The majority of respondents (93.44%) were female, with the largest age groups being 30-39 years (36.89%) and 40-49 years (36.07%). Notably, there were no male respondents in the 20-29 and 60+ age categories, indicating a gender imbalance in the teaching profession, particularly in inclusive education settings.

**Table 1.**  
**Age and Gender of the Respondents**

Age (in years)	Female		Male		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
60 and above	3	2.46	0	0.00	3	2.46
50-59	14	11.48	1	0.82	15	12.30
40-49	41	33.61	3	2.46	44	36.07
30-39	41	33.61	4	3.28	45	36.89
20-29	15	12.30	0	0.00	15	12.30
<b>Total</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>93.44</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6.56</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100.00</b>

- **Educational Attainment:** Most respondents (51.64%) held a Master's degree, while 29.51% had a Bachelor's degree. This high level of educational attainment suggests that teachers are generally well-equipped to handle the challenges of inclusive education.

**Table 2.**  
**Highest Educational Attainment of the Respondents**

Educational Attainment	f	%
Doctorate Graduate	3	2.46
With Doctorate Units	2	1.64
Master's Graduate	63	51.64
With Master's Units	18	14.75



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Bachelor's Degree	36	29.51
<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100.00</b>

- **Length of Service:** Over half of the respondents (52.46%) had more than 11 years of service, indicating a stable and experienced workforce.

**Table 3.**

**Length of Service of the Respondents**

Length of Service (in years)	f	%
16 and above	34	27.87
11-15	30	24.59
6-10	28	22.95
1-5	25	20.49
less than one year	5	4.10
<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100.00</b>

- **Professional Development:** The most frequently completed training was in Mental Health Awareness (ranked 1st), followed by Inclusive Education Training (2nd) and Stress Management (3rd). However, a notable number of teachers (16) reported no professional development courses completed.

**Table 4.**

**Professional Development Courses Completed  
by the Respondents**

Professional Development Courses	f	Rank
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Inclusive Education Training	54	2
Classroom Management	14	8.5
EQ Training	13	10
Stress Management	51	3
Conflict Resolution Training	4	11
Behavior Management Training	25	6
Differentiated Instruction	49	4
Mental Health Awareness	78	1
Coping Strategies	14	8.5
Team Building	41	5
Others	2	12
None	16	7

### *Training and Awareness of Inclusive Practices*

The data revealed that slightly more than half of the respondents (52.46%) had not received training in inclusive education, nor were they aware of current inclusive practices. This gap suggests a potential area for improvement in teacher preparation and ongoing professional development.

**Table 5.**

#### **Respondents' training in inclusive education**

Training in Inclusive Education	f	%
With Training	58	47.54
No Training	64	52.46



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**Total**

**122**

**100.00**

**Table 6.**

**Respondents' Awareness of Current Inclusive Practices**

Awareness of Current Inclusive Practices	f	%
With Awareness	58	47.54
No Awareness	64	52.46
<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table 7.**

**Level of stress experienced by the respondents in handling inclusive classes**

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	In general, how stressful do you find being a teacher dealing with students with special needs?	3.73	0.84	High
2	Not enough time allotted to complete your work.	3.57	0.72	High



3	Excessive workload or too many tasks to complete.	3.68	0.81	High
4	Inadequate disciplinary policies in the school.	3.12	1.02	Moderate
5	Responsibility for the progress and learning of your students.	3.51	0.96	High
6	Lack of effective consultation and assistance from administration.	2.97	0.94	Moderate
7	Large class sizes that limit the time you can spend with individual students.	3.54	0.99	High
8	Attitudes and behavior of the school principal or head of the	2.7	1.07	Moderate



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special  
education  
department.

9 Lack of  
recognition or  
appreciation 2.56 1.07 Low  
for good  
teaching.

10 Insufficient  
support from  
parents or 3.36 0.97 Moderate  
guardians.

**Aggregate  
Weighted Mean 3.27**

**Aggregate Standard Deviation 0.94** **Moderate**

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**Legend:** 4.21-5.00-Very High; 3.41-4.20-High; 2.61-3.40-Moderate; 1.81-2.60-Low; 1.00-1.80-Very Low

### *Levels of Stress Experienced*

The data showed an aggregate weighted mean of 3.27, indicating a moderate level of stress among teachers. The highest stressors identified were related to general teaching in inclusive settings and excessive workloads, while the lowest stressor was the lack of recognition for good teaching.

### *Coping Strategies Utilized*

The data indicated that coping strategies were "Moderately Utilized," with an aggregate weighted mean of 3.40. The most utilized strategies involved organizing time and discussing problems with colleagues. However, professional counseling was the least utilized strategy, suggesting potential stigma or access issues related to mental health support.





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**Table 8.**

**Extent to which the respondents utilize the coping strategies to cope up with stress**

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	Discussing problems with professional colleagues.	3.87	0.86	Utilized
2	Discussing problems with personal friends and family.	3.63	0.87	Utilized
3	Organizing your time and setting priorities.	3.91	0.72	Utilized
4	Engaging in hobbies or relaxing activities to reduce stress.	3.66	0.83	Utilized
5	Taking courses and workshops to improve your skills.	3.23	0.78	Moderately Utilized
6	Walking, jogging, or maintaining a healthy diet and exercise.	3.40	0.86	Moderately Utilized
7	Leaving school problems at school.	3.43	0.95	Utilized
8	Taking a day off when feeling overwhelmed.	3.16	1.00	Moderately Utilized
9	Getting professional counseling or therapy.	2.41	1.14	Less Utilized
10	Taking a nap or stepping away to relax for a while.	3.34	1.05	Moderately Utilized
<b>Aggregate Weighted Mean</b>		<b>3.40</b>		<b>Moderately Utilized</b>
<b>Aggregate Standard Deviation</b>			<b>0.91</b>	

**Legend:** 4.21-5.00-Highly Utilized; 3.41-4.20-Utilized; 2.61-3.40-Moderately Utilized; 1.81-2.60-Less Utilized;

1.00-1.80-Not Utilized



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## *Impact of Stress*

The aggregate weighted mean for the impact of stress was 3.01, indicated a moderate impact on teachers. The highest impacts reported were feelings of being overwhelmed and exhausted, while the lowest was the desire to quit teaching.

**Table 9.**  
**Extent of Impact of Stress to the Respondents**

S/ N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	How often do you feel exhausted?	3.21	0.65	Moderate
2	How often do you feel anxious or nervous?	2.95	0.78	Moderate
3	How often do you feel overwhelmed by your work?	3.26	0.81	Moderate
4	How often do you feel frustrated?	3.02	0.80	Moderate
5	How often do you feel irritable?	2.91	0.77	Moderate
6	How often do you feel unable to cope with your responsibilities?	2.94	0.76	Moderate
7	How often do you feel emotionally distant from students with special needs?	2.86	0.79	Moderate
8	How often do you feel guilty about not doing enough for your students?	3.01	0.77	Moderate
9	How often do you feel like quitting teaching students with special needs?	2.84	0.84	Moderate
10	How often does school stress carry over to other aspects of your life?	3.12	0.78	Moderate
<b>Aggregate Weighted Mean</b>		<b>3.01</b>		
<b>Aggregate Standard Deviation</b>			<b>0.77</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

**Legend:** 4.21-5.00-Very High; 3.41-4.20-High; 2.61-3.40-Moderate; 1.81-2.60-Low; 1.00-1.80-Very Low

## *Correlational Analyses*

The results of correlational analyses:



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- **Stress and Coping Strategies:** A weak positive correlation ( $r = 0.309$ ) was found between stress and the utilization of coping strategies ( $p = 0.001$ ), indicating that higher stress levels were associated with greater use of coping strategies.

**Table 10.**

**Test of relationship between stress and coping strategies of the respondents**

Variables	r-value	Strength of Correlation	p - value	Decision	Remarks
Stress and Coping Strategies	0.309*	Weak Positive	0.001	Reject $H_0$	Significant

\*significant at  $p < 0.05$  (two-tailed)

- **Stress and Its Impact:** A moderate positive correlation ( $r = 0.512$ ) was found between stress and its impact ( $p = 0.000$ ), suggesting that as stress levels increased, so did the perceived negative impact on teachers.

**Table 11.**

**Test of relationship between stress and its impact to the respondents**

Variables	r-value	Strength of Correlation	p - value	Decision	Remarks
Stress and Its Impact	0.512*	Moderate Positive	0.000	Reject $H_0$	Significant

\*significant at  $p < 0.05$  (two-tailed)

## Conclusion

This study provided valuable insights into the stress levels, coping strategies, and impact of stress experienced by general education teachers managing inclusive classrooms at Mandaue City Central School. The findings revealed that while most respondents were experienced educators with advanced degrees, a significant number lacked formal training in inclusive education practices—an essential component for effectively addressing the diverse needs of students.

Teachers reported moderate overall stress levels, with the most pressing stressors arising from the challenges of teaching students with special needs and coping with excessive workloads. Although coping strategies were moderately utilized, common approaches included time management and



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peer discussions, while professional counseling services were notably underutilized. The moderate impact of stress was evident in feelings of exhaustion, being overwhelmed, and difficulty coping, particularly due to workload pressures.

Statistical analyses highlighted significant relationships between key variables:

- A weak positive correlation between stress levels and coping strategy use suggests that while teachers employ coping mechanisms, these strategies may not be fully effective in mitigating stress.
- A moderate positive correlation between stress levels and their impact underscores the tangible effects of stress on teacher well-being.

These findings underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions to support teachers in inclusive classrooms. Specifically:

1. **Workload Reduction:** Addressing excessive workload demands through administrative support or additional staffing.
2. **Professional Development:** Providing comprehensive training programs focused on inclusive education practices to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to manage diverse classrooms effectively.
3. **Enhanced Coping Mechanisms:** Promoting a broader range of coping strategies, including access to professional counseling services and peer support networks.

By implementing these measures, schools can foster a healthier work environment for educators while enhancing their effectiveness in inclusive classrooms. Ultimately, such efforts will benefit both teachers and students, creating a more supportive and productive educational experience for all.

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### **Authors Contributions**

All authors contributed significantly to this study through various roles. The lead authors were responsible for coordinating data collection and preparing the final manuscript. An advisor provided essential guidance and conducted a thorough review of the content. Additional experts from diverse specializations collaborated to ensure the accuracy of the findings, strengthen the methodology, and refine the results through multiple rounds of feedback. This collaborative review process greatly enhanced the overall quality, rigor, and impact of the study's reporting.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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