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Teachers' Instructional Competence and Students' Academic Performance: Examining the Mediating Role of Academic Study Load in Higher Education Management

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Abstract

This study examined the mediating effect of students' academic study load on the relationship between perceived teachers' instructional competence and students' academic performance in General Education Courses (GEC) within the Isabela State University System. A quantitative, descriptive-correlational research design was employed, involving first-year education students selected through convenience sampling. Data were collected using a validated researcher-made questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics, regression analysis, and mediation analysis. Findings revealed that teachers demonstrated a high level of instructional competence across content mastery, pedagogical knowledge, classroom management, and instructional adaptability. Students also reported a high level of academic study load, particularly in coping and adjustment strategies, while academic performance was generally fairly satisfactory. Regression analysis showed that teachers' instructional competence significantly predicted both academic performance and academic study load. However, academic study load showed only a weak relationship with academic performance. Mediation analysis further indicated that academic study load did not significantly mediate the relationship between instructional competence and academic performance. Overall, the findings suggest that instructional competence influences academic performance directly, while academic study load does not serve as a mechanism in this relationship. The results highlight the importance of considering learner-related and contextual factors in improving academic outcomes.

Keywords: instructional competence, academic study load, academic performance, mediation analysis, general education courses

THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND

Introduction

In contemporary education, the quality of instruction in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) remains a persistent concern, as universities are tasked with producing graduates who are skilled, adaptive, and responsive to the evolving demands of society. In this regard, HEIs play a vital role in equipping learners with advanced knowledge, critical thinking skills, and other essential competencies required in professional practice. One of the key determinants of achieving these educational outcomes is the quality of instruction, as it directly shapes students' learning experiences.

Learning is viewed as an active process in which students construct knowledge through meaningful engagement, structured instruction, and purposeful learning experiences, consistent with Constructivist Learning Theory (Piaget, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978). Anchored in this perspective, teachers function as facilitators of learning rather than mere transmitters of knowledge, designing environments that promote inquiry, problem-solving, and conceptual understanding. Within this framework, instructional competence, operationalized through content mastery, pedagogical knowledge, classroom management, and instructional adaptability, enables students to engage effectively with academic tasks and achieve desirable learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022; Hattie, 2023).

Globally, higher education systems face challenges related to increasing student populations, diversity, and academic demands. Consequently, students' academic study load, engagement, and performance have become critical areas of concern. Empirical findings suggest that excessive academic study load, characterized by task volume, time demands, academic pressure, and coping demands, negatively affects students' motivation, well-being, and academic achievement (Kember, 2021). Conversely, effective instructional practices help reduce these burdens by providing clear expectations, structured tasks, and student-centered learning environments (Credé & Kuncel, 2022).

In the Philippine context, State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) continue to face challenges intensified by the implementation of Republic Act 10931, or the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act. While this policy has expanded access to higher education, it has also contributed to increased student enrollment, resulting in heavier academic demands and instructional pressures. Correspondingly, global and regional reports indicate increasing challenges in student retention and completion rates in higher education (OECD, 2023; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023), highlighting the need to examine academic performance determinants beyond traditional instructional explanations.

Within higher education, particularly in general education courses, first-year students are exposed to interdisciplinary content, unfamiliar concepts, and multiple academic requirements. Studies indicate that students' academic performance is significantly influenced by their academic study load, particularly in terms of task demands, time constraints, academic pressure, and coping mechanisms (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021; Richardson et al., 2021).

Although prior research has independently examined instructional competence, academic study load, and academic performance, limited attention has been given to examining academic study load as a mediating mechanism linking instructional competence and academic performance. Moreover, studies employing regression-based mediation analysis within the context of General Education Courses in SUCs remain scarce.

To address this gap, this study examined the direct and indirect effects of perceived teachers' instructional competence on students' academic performance, with academic study load functioning as a mediating variable. Grounded in constructivist learning theory and a regression-based single-level mediation framework, this study contributes empirical evidence on how instructional competence and academic study load jointly predict academic performance among students in State Universities and Colleges.

Statement of the Problem

This study investigated the mediating effect of students' academic study load on the relationship between perceived teachers' instructional competence and students' academic performance in General Education Courses (GEC) within the Isabela State University System.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of teachers' instructional competence in General Education Courses in terms of:
   a. Content Mastery
   b. Pedagogical Knowledge
   c. Classroom Management
   d. Instructional Adaptability
2. What is the level of students' academic study load in terms of:
   a. Study Volume and Task Load
   b. Time Management
   c. Academic Pressure and Stress
   d. Coping and Adjustment Strategies
3. What is the students' level of academic performance based on their General Education Course average grades?
4. Does perceived teachers' instructional competence significantly predict students' academic performance?
5. Does perceived teachers' instructional competence significantly predict students' academic study load?
6. Does students' academic study load significantly predict academic performance?
7. Does students' academic study load mediate the relationship between teachers' instructional competence and students' academic performance?
8. What instructional and academic study load policies may be proposed based on the findings?

Hypotheses

Based on the research questions, the following null hypotheses were tested:

H_{01}: Teachers' instructional competence does not significantly predict students' academic performance in General Education Courses.

H_{02}: Teachers' instructional competence does not significantly predict students' academic study load.

H_{03}: Students' academic study load does not significantly predict academic performance in General Education Courses.

H_{04}: Students' academic study load does not significantly mediate the relationship between teachers' instructional competence and students' academic performance.

Significance of the Study

This study provides empirical insights into the relationships among teachers' instructional competence, students' academic study load, and academic performance in General Education Courses. By examining both direct and indirect effects through regression-based mediation analysis, the findings are expected to contribute to evidence-based teaching and learning practices in higher education.

Specifically, the results may benefit teachers by providing insights into how instructional competence dimensions, content mastery, pedagogical knowledge, classroom management, and instructional adaptability, relate to students' academic performance both directly and through academic study load. These findings may guide instructional planning, task design, and classroom strategies that promote balanced academic demands and improved student learning outcomes.

For students, the study enhances awareness of how instructional practices and academic study load influence academic performance. This may support the development of improved time management, coping, and academic adjustment strategies in general education courses.

For academic administrators and curriculum planners, the findings may serve as a basis for strengthening faculty development programs, instructional quality enhancement, and academic study load design. Guidance counselors may also utilize the findings to design targeted academic support and intervention programs that address study load-related challenges.

Moreover, for future researchers, this study contributes to the limited literature on regression-based mediation analysis in higher education, particularly within SUCs and general education contexts. Overall, the study promotes a balanced, student-centered, and evidence-informed instructional environment across higher education institutions.

Scope and Delimitation

This study was conducted across campuses of the Isabela State University System and focused on first-year Education students who had completed General Education Courses during the first semester of Academic Year 2025–2026.

The study examined three variables: perceived teachers' instructional competence, students' academic study load, and students' academic performance in general education courses. It employed a regression-based single-level mediation framework to determine both direct and indirect effects among the variables. All variables were treated at the student level. Teachers' instructional competence was measured based on students' perceptions, while academic study load and academic performance were likewise student-reported or student-based measures.

The study did not include external variables such as socio-economic status, emotional well-being, family background, institutional resources, or extracurricular activities, as these were beyond its scope. Also, irregular and transferred students and those who were not officially enrolled as first-year education students were excluded to ensure consistency in academic exposure and experience.

Definition of Terms

This section presents the key terms used in the study along with their operational definitions to ensure clarity and consistent understanding of how they are used in the context of this research.

Academic Performance. Refers to the students' average grades in general education courses.

Academic Pressure and Stress. Refers to students' perception of the psychological and emotional strain experienced due to the subject tasks given by teachers. It is measured based on students' perceived level of stress and pressure associated with academic tasks.

Academic Study Load. Refers to students' perception of their obligations, time requirements, and stress in accomplishing subject tasks. It is measured through students' ratings across four dimensions: Study Volume and Task Load, Time Management, Academic Pressure and Stress, and Coping and Adjustment Strategies.

Classroom Management. Refers to the ability of teachers to create a conducive learning environment consistently. It is measured through students' ratings of how they effectively manage time, handle conflicts, and set expectations while maintaining a smooth, efficient, and professional way of handling the class.

Coping and Adjustment Strategies. Refers to students' perceived ability to manage and adapt to academic requirements in the course. It is evaluated by how they adjust their schedules and learning habits and find relevant support in managing their academic-related stress.

Instructional Adaptability. Refers to teachers' ability to modify their teaching strategies by providing alternative techniques in explaining lessons, integrating technology in their instructions, and responding to challenges to make learning experiences more effective.

Mastery of the Content. Refers to the teachers' level of knowledge and preparation on the subject matter. It is measured through students' ratings in which teachers' ability to explain lessons, to provide examples related to real-life experiences, and to answer students' questions are to be evaluated.

Single-Level Mediation Analysis. Refers to a regression-based statistical technique used to examine the direct and indirect effects of teachers' instructional competence on students' academic performance, with academic study load functioning as the mediating variable.

Pedagogical Knowledge. Refers to teachers' ability to systematically deliver lessons, properly align examples to concepts, evaluate students' feedback, and encourage active collaboration, considering the students' needs and experiences.

Study Volume and Task Load. Refers to the frequency and difficulty of the course-related tasks given to students. It is measured through students' ratings of how much time is consumed in specific activities and how much effort is exerted to accomplish them.

Teachers' Instructional Competence. Refers to the overall perceived ability of the teachers to facilitate effective teaching by demonstrating subject-matter expertise, employing appropriate teaching strategies, managing the classroom efficiently, and adapting instruction to meet students' needs. This is measured across four dimensions: content mastery, pedagogical knowledge, classroom management, and instructional adaptability.

Time Management. Refers to students' ability to manage and balance their time in their academics with their personal duties. It is evaluated by how they meet deadlines, manage commitments, and complete subject tasks.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

This chapter synthesizes relevant literature and studies on teachers' instructional competence, students' academic study load, and academic performance in higher education. It is organized based on a mediation framework where instructional competence influences academic performance directly and indirectly through academic study load. The discussion is anchored on Constructivist Learning Theory, which emphasizes that learning occurs through active engagement supported by effective instructional practices. This chapter provides the theoretical and empirical foundation of the study.

Teachers' Instructional Competence and Students' Academic Performance

Teachers' instructional competence is widely recognized as a key determinant of students' academic performance in higher education. It refers to the teacher's ability to deliver instruction effectively through content mastery, pedagogical knowledge, classroom management, and instructional adaptability. These dimensions collectively influence how students understand, engage with, and apply academic content in learning situations.

Research consistently shows that instructional quality is strongly associated with student learning outcomes. High-quality teaching characterized by clarity, structure, and effective explanation enhances student understanding and achievement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021; Hattie, 2023). In addition, instructional practices that provide clear learning goals and timely feedback improve student comprehension and academic performance by reducing learning confusion and supporting cognitive processing (Hattie, 2023; Wisniewski et al., 2021).

Instructional competence is particularly important in general education courses where students come from diverse academic backgrounds. Structured instruction and effective pedagogical strategies help students build foundational understanding and support critical thinking development (Ambrose et al., 2022).

Moreover, effective classroom management contributes to a structured and supportive learning environment that promotes engagement and reduces learning disruptions (Wang et al., 2021).

Instructional adaptability also plays a significant role in student learning outcomes. Teachers who adjust instructional strategies based on students' needs, readiness, and learning conditions are more effective in promoting academic achievement in diverse classroom contexts (Bond & Bedenlier, 2022). This adaptability ensures that instruction remains responsive and aligned with student learning capacity.

Active learning approaches further strengthen instructional effectiveness. Learning environments that encourage participation, collaboration, and problem-solving have been shown to enhance deeper understanding and academic performance (Chi & Wylie, 2021; Theobald et al., 2021). These findings collectively suggest that instructional competence is a strong predictor of academic performance.

However, while existing studies confirm the direct relationship between instructional competence and academic performance, less attention has been given to the mechanisms explaining this relationship. This highlights the need to examine intervening variables such as academic study load.

Academic Study Load and Students' Academic Performance

Academic study load refers to students' perceived volume of academic tasks, time demands, cognitive effort, and psychological strain associated with course requirements. It reflects not only the quantity of tasks but also how students experience and manage academic demands.

In higher education, academic study load significantly influences academic performance. When students experience excessive workload, their cognitive capacity may become overloaded, limiting deep understanding and effective learning (Sweller et al., 2022). Hence, Cognitive Load Theory explains that excessive extraneous load reduces the ability to process and retain information, leading to lower academic performance.

High academic study load is also associated with reduced motivation and increased stress, which negatively affect academic outcomes. Studies show that students experiencing heavy academic demands are more likely to experience fatigue and decreased academic engagement (Kember, 2021; Salmela-Aro et al., 2021). Similarly, perceived workload has been linked to lower academic achievement and reduced academic well-being (Richardson et al., 2022).

Time management difficulties further contribute to the negative effects of academic study load, especially among first-year students adjusting to university demands. Poor management of academic responsibilities often leads to stress accumulation and decreased academic efficiency (Credé & Kuncel, 2022; Núñez et al., 2021).

Conversely, when academic study load is manageable and well-structured, students are more likely to engage in meaningful learning and sustain academic performance. These findings establish academic study load as an important predictor of academic performance.

Teachers' Instructional Competence as a Predictor of Students' Academic Study Load

Academic study load is not solely determined by the amount of academic tasks but is significantly influenced by instructional quality. The way teachers design, organize, and communicate learning tasks shapes how students perceive academic demands.

Instructional clarity plays a key role in reducing perceived workload. When teachers provide clear instructions, structured activities, and well-defined expectations, students are better able to manage academic tasks effectively (Ambrose et al., 2022). In contrast, unclear and unstructured instruction increases cognitive effort and contributes to higher perceived workload (Richardson et al., 2022).

From a cognitive perspective, well-designed instruction reduces unnecessary cognitive load, allowing students to focus on meaningful learning processes (Sweller et al., 2022). Poor instructional design, on the other hand, increases cognitive strain and makes tasks appear more difficult than they actually are.

Instructional adaptability also helps regulate academic study load. Teachers who adjust pacing, task difficulty, and instructional strategies based on student readiness help ensure that academic demands remain manageable (Bond & Bedenlier, 2022). This reduces overload and supports students' capacity to cope with academic requirements.

Effective classroom management further contributes to reducing perceived academic load by creating a structured and predictable learning environment that supports task organization and time management (Wang et al., 2021).

Overall, instructional competence significantly influences how students experience academic study load by shaping the structure and clarity of academic tasks.

Academic Study Load as a Mediating Variable

Mediation analysis explains how an independent variable affects a dependent variable through an intervening mechanism. In educational research, academic study load is increasingly recognized as a mechanism through which instructional practices influence academic outcomes.

Instructional competence affects how academic tasks are structured and delivered, which in turn influences students' perception of workload and academic stress. This perceived workload subsequently affects academic performance (Kember, 2021; Richardson et al., 2022).

Cognitive Load Theory supports this mechanism by explaining that effective instructional design reduces extraneous cognitive load, allowing students to allocate more cognitive resources to learning (Sweller et al., 2022). This improves learning efficiency and academic performance.

In addition, research shows that perceived workload partially explains the relationship between instructional quality and academic outcomes (Richardson et al., 2022). Instructional clarity and feedback influence how students regulate learning, which is shaped by their perceived workload demands (Panadero et al., 2022).

Furthermore, academic stress and workload serve as pathways linking instructional environments to academic performance (Kember, 2021). These findings support the mediating role of academic study load. However, there is still limited empirical research using regression-based mediation analysis in higher education contexts, particularly in general education courses in State Universities and Colleges.

Synthesis of Literature and Research Gaps

The reviewed literature establishes that both instructional competence and academic study load are important determinants of academic performance. Instructional competence enhances learning through improved teaching effectiveness, while academic study load influences students' ability to manage academic demands and sustain engagement.

The literature also suggests that instructional competence shapes students' perception of academic study load, indicating an indirect pathway affecting academic performance. However, most studies examine these variables separately rather than within an integrated mediation framework.

In addition, limited studies in higher education, particularly in Philippine State Universities and Colleges, have applied regression-based single-level mediation analysis to examine these relationships in general education courses.

To address these gaps, this study examines academic study load as a mediating variable in the relationship between instructional competence and academic performance using a regression-based mediation model.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Constructivist Learning Theory, which posits that learning is an active process in which learners construct knowledge through meaningful interaction with their environment (Fosnot, 2021). Students actively build understanding through engagement with instructional experiences.

Within this framework, teachers act as facilitators who design learning environments that promote inquiry, engagement, and conceptual understanding. Instructional competence is therefore essential in organizing content, clarifying expectations, and aligning instruction with students' cognitive abilities (Ambrose et al., 2022; Bond & Bedenlier, 2022).

Academic study load reflects students' perceived experience of instructional demands. When instruction is clear and well-structured, students experience manageable cognitive load and improved engagement. However, poorly designed instruction increases cognitive burden and reduces academic performance (Sweller et al., 2022; Richardson et al., 2022).

Thus, instructional competence is expected to influence academic performance both directly and indirectly through academic study load.

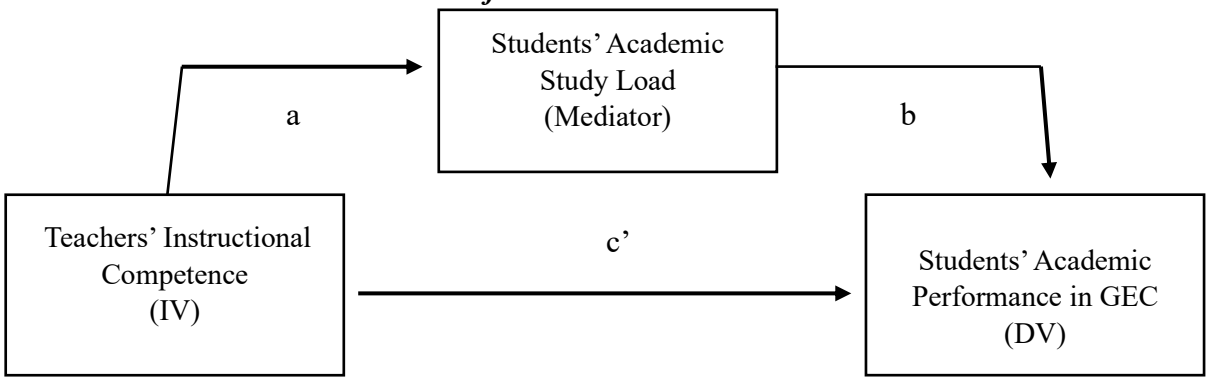
Conceptual Framework

This study adopts a regression-based single-level mediation framework to examine the relationships among teachers' instructional competence, students' academic study load, and academic performance in general education courses.

Teachers' instructional competence is the independent variable, operationalized through content mastery, pedagogical knowledge, classroom management, and instructional adaptability. Academic performance is the dependent variable measured through students' general education grades. Academic study load serves as the mediating variable reflecting task volume, time demands, academic pressure, and coping strategies. *Path a* represents the effect of instructional competence on academic study load. *Path b* represents the effect of academic study load on academic performance. *Path c'* represents the direct effect of instructional competence on academic performance. The indirect effect is represented by $a \times b$, indicating the mediating role of academic study load.

Figure 1.

Mediation Model of Teachers' Instructional Competence, Students' Academic Study Load, and Academic Performance in General Education Courses



Note. This figure illustrates the hypothesized mediation model in which teachers' instructional competence predicts students' academic performance both directly (c′) and indirectly through academic study load. Path a represents the effect of instructional competence on academic study load, while path b represents

the effect of academic study load on academic performance. Path c′ represents the direct effect of instructional competence on academic performance after accounting for the mediator. The indirect effect is computed as a × b, consistent with regression-based single-level mediation analysis.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology of the study, including the research design, respondents and sampling procedures, research instruments, data-gathering procedures, statistical treatment, and ethical considerations. It also describes the statistical procedures employed to examine the direct and indirect effects of perceived teachers' instructional competence on students' academic performance, with academic study load as the mediating variable.

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, descriptive-correlational research design using a regression-based single-level mediation analysis to examine the relationships among teachers' instructional competence, students' academic study load, and students' academic performance in General Education Courses (GEC) within the Isabela State University System. The design is appropriate as it allows the examination of direct and indirect relationships among variables without manipulation, reflecting naturally occurring conditions in the educational setting. The analytical framework followed a mediation model in which instructional competence serves as the independent variable, academic study load as the mediating variable, and academic performance as the dependent variable, enabling the estimation of both direct and indirect effects.

Research Locale

The study was conducted within the Isabela State University (ISU) System. Respondents were drawn from the different campuses offering General Education Courses (GEC), providing a consistent academic setting for examining instructional competence, academic study load, and academic performance. The ISU System was chosen as the research locale because it represents the natural educational environment where the variables of the study coexist and can be meaningfully observed within comparable course structures across campuses.

Population and Sampling

Population

The target population of this study consisted of the first-year education students enrolled in ISU. Specifically, these were students who had completed General Education Courses during the first semester of the Academic Year 2025–2026. This group was selected as they possess recent and relevant academic experiences related to instructional practices, academic study load, and academic performance within general education courses.

Sample Size

The sample size for this study was determined using G*Power statistical software to ensure adequate statistical power for regression-based mediation analysis. The computation was based on a medium effect size, an alpha level of 0.05, and a statistical power of 0.95, which yielded a minimum required sample size sufficient for detecting significant relationships among the variables.

However, the study utilized a total of 372 respondents drawn from the target population. This exceeds the minimum sample size requirement, thereby increasing the statistical power, precision, and stability of the estimates. The larger sample size strengthens the reliability of the regression and mediation analyses conducted in the study.

Sampling Technique

This study employed a non-probability convenience sampling technique. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed via campus representatives across selected campuses of the ISU System. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were included provided they met the inclusion criteria: (1) first-year Education students, (2) enrolled in the ISU System, and (3) had completed General Education Courses during the First semester of Academic Year 2025–2026.

The researcher had no direct control over the number of respondents per campus due to the voluntary and distributed nature of data collection. However, strict adherence to inclusion criteria ensured that only qualified participants were included in the study. Although convenience sampling limits generalizability, it is appropriate for examining relationships among variables in a natural educational setting.

Research Instruments

The primary data collection instrument used in this study was a researcher-made structured questionnaire developed from relevant literature and adapted from established measures of instructional competence, academic study load, and academic performance indicators. The instrument was contextualized to align with the setting of General Education Courses within the Isabela State University (ISU) System.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part measured perceived teachers' instructional competence, which included four dimensions: content mastery, pedagogical knowledge, classroom management, and instructional adaptability. Each dimension was assessed using ten (10) items rated by students based on their perceptions of instructional practices in General Education Courses.

The second part measured students' academic study load, which consisted of four dimensions: task volume, time demands, academic pressure, and coping strategies. Items assessed students' perceived academic study load and associated cognitive and emotional demands. Both instructional competence and academic study load were measured using a five-point Likert scale with the following interpretation:

Range and Description	Level of Teachers' Instructional Competence (Interpretation)	Level of Students' Academic Study Load (Interpretation)
4.21 – 5.00 (Strongly Agree)	Very High	Very High
3.41 – 4.20 (Agree)	High	High
2.61 – 3.40 (Neutral)	Moderate	Moderate
1.81 – 2.60 (Disagree)	Low	Low
1.00 – 1.80 (Strongly Disagree)	Very Low	Very Low

The third part measured students' academic performance in General Education Courses, based on their weighted average grades. The grading scale used is presented below:

Percent Equivalent	Grade	Description
98-100	1.00 -1.24	Excellent
95-97	1.25 – 1.49	Very Satisfactory
92-94	1.50 – 1.74	Satisfactory
89-91	1.75 – 1.99	Fairly Satisfactory
86-88	2.00 – 2.24	Good
83-85	2.25 – 2.49	Fairly Good

80-82	2.50 – 2.74	Fair
77-79	2.75 – 2.79	Below Fair
75-76	3.00	Passed
Incomplete	INC.	Requirements not fully met
74 and below	5.00	Failed

The instrument was carefully developed, grounded in established educational frameworks, and subjected to validation and reliability testing to ensure its clarity, validity, and internal consistency.

Validity and Reliability of Instruments

The researcher-made instrument underwent content validation to ensure its clarity, relevance, and alignment with the objectives of the study. Five experts in the field of education reviewed the questionnaire in terms of item clarity, content relevance, and consistency with the constructs being measured, namely perceived teachers' instructional competence and students' academic study load. Based on their suggestions, revisions were made, including the refinement of item wording, removal of redundant statements, and improvement of the overall structure to enhance readability and conceptual alignment.

To establish reliability, a pilot test was conducted among respondents who were not part of the final sample. The responses from the pilot testing were analyzed using JAMOVI statistical software. The instrument obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.98, indicating excellent internal consistency. This result suggests that the items are highly consistent in measuring the intended constructs and that the instrument is reliable for use in the main study.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data-gathering process commenced with the securing of formal approval from the Graduate School of Isabela State University–Echague Campus. Upon approval, a formal request letter to conduct the study was submitted to the administrators of each ISU campus. Once permission was granted, the request was subsequently endorsed to the respective deans and/or program chairpersons of the education programs.

After securing the necessary approvals, coordination was made with the class advisers of the identified first-year education students to facilitate access to the respondents and to schedule the administration of the survey. Prior to data collection, the researcher provided a brief orientation to the respondents, explaining the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and assuring them of the confidentiality and voluntary nature of their participation. Informed consent was obtained before the distribution of the questionnaires.

Data collection was conducted using a mixed-mode approach, consisting of both printed (paper-based) questionnaires and an online survey administered through Google Forms. This approach was employed to ensure wider coverage of respondents across the campuses and to accommodate varying accessibility preferences.

For the paper-based responses, completed questionnaires were retrieved personally by the researcher, checked for completeness, and organized accordingly. For the online responses, data were automatically collected through Google Forms and subsequently exported to Microsoft Excel for initial organization. All gathered data from both modes were then consolidated, coded, cleaned, and prepared for statistical analysis. Data screening was performed to ensure accuracy, completeness, and consistency prior to importing the dataset into JAMOVI statistical software for further analysis.

Statistical Treatment

The data gathered in this study were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools aligned with the objectives

of the research. All analyses were conducted using JAMOVI statistical software, with the level of significance set at 0.05.

For descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation were used to determine the level of teachers' instructional competence and students' academic study load. The mean was used to describe the central tendency of responses, while the standard deviation measured the dispersion of responses across indicators and dimensions. Descriptive interpretations were based on a five-point Likert scale to determine the corresponding level of each variable.

For students' academic performance, frequency and percentage distribution were used to describe the distribution of grades in general education courses. In addition, the weighted mean was computed to determine the overall academic performance level of the respondents.

For inferential statistics, regression analysis was used to determine the predictive relationships among variables. Specifically, simple linear regression was employed to examine: (1) the effect of teachers' instructional competence on academic study load, (2) the effect of academic study load on academic performance, and (3) the effect of instructional competence on academic performance.

A single-level mediation analysis was conducted to examine whether academic study load mediates the relationship between teachers' instructional competence (independent variable) and students' academic performance (dependent variable). The mediation model estimated the direct effect, indirect effect, and total effect using regression-based procedures.

To ensure robustness of the mediation results, bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was applied to generate bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals for the indirect effect. The mediation effect was considered significant when the confidence interval did not include zero. Effect size for the mediation model was assessed using standardized coefficients and R^2 values, which indicate the proportion of variance explained in the dependent variable and mediator.

The indirect effect represented the mediating influence of academic study load on the relationship between instructional competence and academic performance, while the direct effect represented the remaining influence of instructional competence on academic performance after accounting for the mediator. The total effect reflected the overall relationship between instructional competence and academic performance without the mediator.

All statistical tests were interpreted at a 5% level of significance ($p < .05$). Results with p-values less than 0.05 were considered statistically significant, while those greater than 0.05 were interpreted as not statistically significant.

Ethical Considerations

This study observed ethical standards in conducting research involving human participants. Prior to data collection, approval to conduct the study was secured from the Graduate School of Isabela State University and from the concerned authorities of the ISU campuses involved in the study. This ensured that proper institutional research protocols were followed.

Participation in the study was voluntary. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, and how the data would be used. Before answering the questionnaire, informed consent was obtained to confirm that they agreed to participate willingly and with full understanding of the study.

The respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. No names or any identifying information were included in the questionnaire. Instead, codes were used to represent the responses to protect the identity and privacy of the participants.

Respondents were also informed that they had the right to refuse to answer any item or withdraw from participation at any time without any penalty or negative consequence.

All data gathered was used strictly for academic purposes only. The completed questionnaires and encoded data were securely stored and accessed only by the researcher to ensure proper data protection and prevent unauthorized access.

Overall, the study ensured that the rights, privacy, and welfare of all respondents were protected throughout the entire research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis and their interpretation in relation to the objectives of the study. It examines the level of teachers' instructional competence, students' academic study load, and students' academic performance. It also explores the predictive relationships among these variables and determines whether academic study load mediates the relationship between instructional competence and academic performance.

Table 1.
Level of Teachers' Instructional Competence

Indicator	Mean	*SD*	Descriptive Interpretation
Content Mastery			
1. The teacher demonstrates strong knowledge of the basic concepts and principles that students need to understand before advancing to higher-level topics.	4.06	0.86	High
2. The teacher presents lessons that are correct, clear, and free from confusing or incorrect explanations.	4.05	0.92	High
3. The teacher presents lessons that are clearly aligned with the learning outcomes stated in the syllabus.	4.10	0.91	High
4. The teacher explains topics at a level that is suitable for the students.	4.07	0.89	High
5. The teacher explains difficult or unfamiliar concepts in ways that the students can easily understand.	3.84	0.99	High
6. The teacher uses examples, illustrations, or situations that are familiar and relevant to the students.	4.11	0.86	High
7. The teacher relates subject matter to real-life experiences to help the students appreciate the importance of the course.	4.17	0.86	High
8. The teacher responds to students' questions with clear and accurate explanations.	4.09	0.88	High

Table 1.
Level of Teachers' Instructional Competence

Indicator	Mean	*SD*	Descriptive Interpretation
9. The teacher uses correct terminology and explains new terms clearly for the students.	4.04	0.84	High
10. The teacher presents lessons in a well-organized and logical sequence that helps the students follow and understand the discussion.	4.09	0.88	High
Composite Mean	4.06	0.77	High
Pedagogical Knowledge			
1. The teacher gives clear directions and explanations that students can easily understand.	4.05	0.86	High
2. The teacher uses various teaching methods depending on the lesson to be presented.	3.92	0.82	High
3. The teacher makes sure that students participate actively during class discussion.	4.00	0.86	High
4. The teacher maintains a smooth flow of discussion and effectively uses time allotted for each session.	3.99	0.91	High
5. The teacher utilizes appropriate and various instructional materials in teaching the course.	3.91	0.89	High
6. The teacher matches teaching approaches to students' level of understanding.	3.96	0.88	High
7. The teacher asks questions and gives activities that let students reflect and think critically.	4.10	0.82	High
8. The teacher gives timely feedback that helps students improve their understanding of the concept.	3.97	0.89	High
9. The teacher creates a positive student-teacher relationship in which students feel comfortable in asking questions and clarifications.	3.97	0.96	High
10. The teacher evaluates learning through oral recitation and written assessments such as quizzes and activities regularly.	4.09	0.86	High
Composite Mean	3.99	0.77	High

Table 1.
Level of Teachers' Instructional Competence

Indicator	Mean	*SD*	Descriptive Interpretation
Classroom Management			
1. The teacher clearly explains class rules at the beginning of course or the session.	4.13	0.86	High
2. The teacher implements class rules fairly and consistently to all students.	4.11	0.82	High
3. The teacher manages class time efficiently and minimizes disruptions.	3.91	0.90	High
4. The teacher creates a conducive space for learning where students feel free to participate, cooperate, and learn.	4.03	0.84	High
5. The teacher addresses disruptive behavior calmly and respectfully.	3.94	0.91	High
6. The teacher is attentive to students' behavior and participation during class.	4.05	0.83	High
7. The teacher promotes respect, discipline, and positive behavior among students.	4.14	0.86	High
8. The teacher smoothly transitions between different class activities.	3.99	0.85	High
9. The teacher creates an environment where the students feel safe, respected, and comfortable.	4.04	0.90	High
10. The teacher responds promptly and appropriately to classroom issues as they arise.	4.02	0.85	High
Composite Mean	4.04	0.76	High
Instructional Adaptability			
1. The teacher adjusts teaching methods when the students struggle in understanding the lesson.	3.81	0.93	High
2. The teacher explains lessons in different ways to help students understand the concept better.	3.98	0.89	High
3. The teacher considers differences in students' learning speed and adjusts the lesson accordingly.	3.85	0.91	High

Table 1.
Level of Teachers' Instructional Competence

Indicator	Mean	*SD*	Descriptive Interpretation
4. The teacher provides additional examples or administers various activities.	4.02	0.86	High
5. The teacher changes the way lessons are taught based on students' suggestions, questions or feedback.	3.80	0.88	High
6. The teacher provides extra support or guidance to students who need to catch up with the lessons.	3.91	0.90	High
7. The teacher adjusts the difficulty level of tasks to be given and the duration of time for the completion.	3.83	0.96	High
8. The teacher uses different teaching approaches to meet students' learning performance.	3.93	0.89	High
9. The teacher delivers lessons by integrating students' backgrounds, needs, and experiences.	3.88	0.91	High
10. The teacher is open for suggestions and is willing to adjust teaching strategies for the students to learn easier and better.	3.94	0.91	High
Composite Mean	3.89	0.81	High
Overall Mean	4.00	0.72	High

Note. Descriptive interpretation is based on the following scale: 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

Table 1 presents the level of perceived teachers' instructional competence across four dimensions: content mastery, pedagogical knowledge, classroom management, and instructional adaptability.

The findings show that teachers demonstrate a high level of instructional competence (M = 4.00, SD = 0.72). This indicates that teachers consistently exhibit effective instructional practices in terms of content mastery, pedagogical knowledge, classroom management, and instructional adaptability.

Among the dimensions, content mastery obtained the highest rating, suggesting that teachers have strong subject knowledge and are able to deliver clear and accurate lessons. This supports the view that strong content knowledge is a core foundation of effective teaching (Hattie, 2023; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Classroom management also received a high rating, indicating that teachers maintain an organized and supportive learning environment, which is strongly associated with improved student engagement and learning outcomes (Holzberger et al., 2020).

Pedagogical knowledge was also rated high, reflecting the use of appropriate teaching strategies and active learning approaches. Research shows that instructional strategies and feedback are important in improving student learning (Mayer, 2021). Instructional adaptability, although still high, obtained the lowest mean.

This suggests that while teachers are generally flexible, adapting instruction to diverse learners may still be improved. This aligns with findings that differentiated instruction remains a challenging aspect of teaching practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Overall, the results indicate that teachers demonstrate strong instructional competence, which is consistent with research emphasizing that effective teaching is built on strong instructional knowledge, classroom organization, and appropriate pedagogy (Hattie, 2023).

Table 2.
Level of Students' Academic Study Load

Indicator	Mean	*SD*	Descriptive Interpretation
Study Volume and Task			
1. The number of assignments and activities administered in the course is acceptable.	3.63	0.94	High
2. The frequency of academic tasks given is appropriate for my ability to learn effectively.	3.78	0.85	High
3. The amount of time needed to complete assigned tasks in the course is reasonable.	3.75	0.91	High
4. The combined study load from different general education courses is manageable.	3.57	0.97	High
5. Deadlines and major requirements in my general education courses do not excessively overlap.	3.59	0.93	High
Composite Mean	3.66	0.82	High
Time Management			
1. I have enough time to complete all my assignments and activities in my General Education courses.	3.59	0.93	High
2. I do not feel rushed when completing my course requirement.	3.39	0.94	Moderate
3. I manage myself and also my time effectively when given tasks related to the course.	3.71	0.87	High
4. I have sufficient study time even when coursework I heavy.	3.51	0.92	High

Table 2.
Level of Students' Academic Study Load

Indicator	Mean	*SD*	Descriptive Interpretation
5. I manage to accomplish weekly tasks required in my general education courses.	3.80	0.84	High
Composite Mean	3.60	0.78	High
Academic Pressure			
1. Deadlines for my general education course (GEC) requirements make me feel anxious and destroy my focus.	2.70	0.96	Moderate
2. Managing tasks from my GEC teachers negatively affects my well-being.	2.50	0.87	Low
3. Evaluations and assessments such as quizzes and exams, including recitation sessions, in my general education courses make me feel pressured.	2.58	1.01	Low
4. The overall amount of work in my general education courses makes me feel stressed.	2.63	0.99	Moderate
5. Balancing the demands of my general education courses with my personal time contributes to my stress.	2.63	0.99	Moderate
Composite Mean	2.61	0.82	Moderate
Coping and Adjustment Strategies			
1. I manage my study load effectively by prioritizing my class activities and requirements.	3.76	0.80	High
2. I allocate excess study time for topics that I find difficult to understand.	3.72	0.82	High
3. I use strategies such as summarizing, reviewing, and group or collaborative learning to cope with course discussions.	3.99	0.82	High
4. I seek support from my teachers, classmates, or friends when tasks are confusing or overwhelming.	3.79	0.87	High

Table 2.
Level of Students' Academic Study Load

Indicator	Mean	*SD*	Descriptive Interpretation
5. I prioritize my academic tasks over my personal activities and routines.	3.74	0.86	High
Composite Mean	3.80	0.70	High
Overall Mean	3.61	0.58	High

Note. Descriptive interpretation is based on the following scale: 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.

Table 2 presents the level of students' academic study load across four dimensions. The results show that students experience a high level of academic study load (M = 3.61, SD = 0.58). This suggests that students face considerable academic demands, but these are generally manageable.

In addition, coping and adjustment strategies obtained the highest rating, indicating that students actively use self-regulated learning strategies such as prioritizing tasks, seeking help, and using study techniques. This supports the idea that self-regulation plays a key role in managing academic demands (Zimmerman, 2020).

Similarly, study volume and time management were rated high, suggesting that students are able to organize their study load effectively. However, academic pressure was rated moderate, indicating that while students experience stress, it is not overwhelming. This aligns with research showing that moderate academic stress is common among students but can be managed through coping strategies (Pascoe et al., 2020).

Overall, students appear capable of handling their academic study load through adaptive learning strategies and time management skills.

Table 3.
Students' Academic Performance in General Education Courses

Level		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Excellent	(1.00 – 1.24)	1	0.20
Very Satisfactory	(1.25 – 1.49)	13	3.40
Satisfactory	(1.50 – 1.74)	49	13.10
Fairly Satisfactory	(1.79 – 1.99)	108	29.00
Good	(2.00 – 2.24)	117	31.40
Fairly Good	(2.25 – 2.49)	70	18.80
Fair	(2.50 – 2.74)	11	2.90
Below Fair	(2.75 – 2.79)	1	0.20
Passed	(3.00)	2	0.54

Note. Mean Grade = 1.96, SD = 0.29, Level = Fairly Satisfactory

Table 3 presents the distribution of students' academic performance in general education courses. The overall mean grade was 1.96 (SD = 0.29), interpreted as fairly satisfactory. Specifically, most students fell within the good (31.45%) and fairly satisfactory (29.03%) categories, indicating that a large proportion achieved average to above-average performance. A notable percentage also attained fairly good (18.82%) and satisfactory (13.17%) ratings. In contrast, only a minimal number of students were classified as excellent (0.27%) and very satisfactory (3.49%), while very few fell under fair, below fair, and passed categories. Overall, the findings suggest that students generally demonstrate moderate academic performance, with most achieving acceptable but not outstanding levels in their general education courses. The findings are consistent with studies showing that most students tend to perform within average achievement levels rather than at extreme ends. According to World Bank (2022), a large proportion of students globally achieve moderate academic performance, with fewer students reaching very high or very low achievement levels.

Additionally, Hattie (2023) emphasized that academic performance is influenced by multiple interacting factors, including teaching quality, student motivation, and learning strategies. This supports the present finding that while students perform at acceptable levels, excellence is less frequently attained, suggesting the need for more targeted academic support.

Table 4.

Regression Analysis of Teachers' Instructional Competence Predicting Students' Academic Performance

				Overall Model Test			
Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	**F**	df1	df2	p
1	0.19	0.04	0.03	13.96	1	370	<.001
Note. Models estimated using sample size of N=372							
Model Coefficients - Academic Performance							
Predictor			Estimate (β)	SE	t	p	
Intercept			2.26	0.18	27.12	<.001	
Teachers' Instructional Competence			-0.08	0.02	-3.74	<.001	

Note. p* < .05 indicates statistical significance.

Table 4 presents the regression analysis examining the predictive effect of teachers' instructional competence on students' academic performance. The results indicate a weak but statistically significant relationship between the variables (R = 0.19), with low explanatory power (R^2 = 0.04; adjusted R^2 = 0.03). This means that approximately 4% of the variance in students' academic performance is explained by teachers' instructional competence. The model is statistically significant, $F(1, 370) = 13.96$, $p < .001$, indicating that instructional competence significantly predicts academic performance.

In terms of direction, the regression coefficient is negative and statistically significant ($\beta = -0.08$, $t = -3.74$, $p < .001$). Since the grading system is inverse-coded (lower values indicate better academic

performance), this indicates that higher instructional competence is associated with better academic performance among students.

Although statistically significant, the effect size remains small, suggesting that instructional competence alone has limited practical influence on academic outcomes. This implies that student achievement is influenced by multiple interacting factors beyond teacher competence.

This finding is consistent with Holzberger et al. (2020), who reported that instructional quality has a positive but modest effect on student achievement when compared with broader learner and contextual variables. Similarly, Hattie (2023) emphasized that teacher effectiveness contributes to learning outcomes but operates alongside student-level factors such as prior achievement, motivation, and self-regulation rather than acting as a sole determinant.

In addition, evidence from large-scale educational research suggests that student-related factors often explain more variance in academic performance than instructional factors alone. For example, Schneider and Preckel (2017) found in their meta-analysis that learning strategies and cognitive engagement are stronger predictors of academic success than instructional conditions in isolation.

Overall, the findings suggest that while teachers' instructional competence significantly contributes to academic performance, its effect is relatively small. This implies that improving student outcomes requires a combination of effective instruction and stronger student learning strategies, motivation, and engagement.

Table 5.

Regression Analysis of Teachers' Instructional Competence Predicting Academic Study Load

Model Fit Measures							
				Overall Model Test			
Model	**R**	**R^2**	**Adjusted R^2**	**F**	**df1**	**df2**	**p**
1	0.70	0.50	0.49	363.66	1	370	<.001
Note. Models estimated using sample size of N=372							

Model Coefficients – Academic Study Load				
Predictor	**Estimate**	**SE**	**t**	**p**
Intercept	1.35	0.12	11.21	<.001
Teachers' Instructional Competence	0.57	0.03	19.07	<.001

Note. p* < .05 indicates statistical significance.

Table 5 presents the regression analysis examining the predictive effect of teachers' instructional competence on students' academic study load. The results indicate a strong positive relationship between the variables (R = 0.70), with substantial explanatory power (R^2 = 0.50; adjusted R^2 = 0.49). This suggests that approximately 50% of the variance in students' academic study load is explained by teachers'

instructional competence, indicating a large effect size and a meaningful contribution of instructional practices to students' perceived academic demands. The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 370) = 363.66$, $p < .001$, confirming that teachers' instructional competence significantly predicts students' academic study load.

In terms of the regression coefficients, teachers' instructional competence demonstrates a strong and statistically significant positive effect on academic study load ($\beta = 0.57$, $SE = 0.03$, $t = 19.07$, $p < .001$). This indicates that as teachers' instructional competence increases, students' academic study load also increases. The intercept ($\beta = 1.35$, $p < .001$) represents the baseline level of academic study load when instructional competence is at zero.

These findings suggest that teachers with higher instructional competence tend to implement more structured, rigorous, and cognitively demanding instructional practices, which in turn elevate students' academic demands. This interpretation is supported by research indicating that high-quality teaching is associated with greater cognitive activation and increased academic effort among students (Holzberger et al., 2021). Similarly, Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) emphasized that effective teaching practices often involve deeper learning tasks and higher expectations, which naturally require greater student engagement and time investment.

However, this relationship should be interpreted with caution. Increased academic study load does not always translate to improved learning outcomes, as excessive workload may lead to student stress or cognitive overload, potentially hindering performance (Sweller et al., 2019, frequently cited in recent studies). This suggests that while instructional competence can enhance the rigor of learning experiences, there is a need to balance instructional quality with manageable cognitive demands.

Overall, the findings indicate that teachers' instructional competence is a strong and significant predictor of students' academic study load. This implies that improvements in instructional competence are associated with increased academic demands, which may reflect more meaningful and cognitively engaging learning experiences, provided that such demands remain within students' capacity to effectively process and learn.

Table 6. ***Regression Analysis of Academic Study Load Predicting Academic Performance***

Model Fit Measures							
				Overall Model Test			
Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	df1	df2	p
1	0.11	0.01	0.01	4.20	1	370	0.041
Note. Models estimated using sample size of N = 372							
Model Coefficients - Academic Performance							
Predictor		Estimate		SE	t	p	
Intercept		2.15		0.09	22.67	<.001	
Academic Study Load		-0.05		0.03	-2.05	.041	

Note. p* < .05 indicates statistical significance.

Table 6 presents the regression analysis examining the effect of academic study load on students' academic performance. The results show a weak but statistically significant relationship between the variables ($R = 0.11$), with very low explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.01$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.01$). This means that only 1% of the changes in academic performance can be explained by academic study load. The model is statistically significant, $F(1, 370) = 4.20$, $p = .041$, which means that academic study load has a significant effect on academic performance, but the effect is very small.

Looking at the direction, academic study load has a negative and significant effect on academic performance ($\beta = -0.05$, $t = -2.05$, $p = .041$). Since the grading system is inverse-coded (lower grades mean better performance), this result shows that higher academic study load is related to slightly better academic performance. However, the effect is very weak, so it has little practical impact.

This result agrees with studies showing that academic workload alone does not strongly affect academic performance, unless students also have good study habits and motivation (Richardson et al., 2012).

Overall, the findings show that academic study load has a significant but very small effect on academic performance. This means that workload alone is not enough to explain students' performance, and other factors such as motivation, study strategies, and teaching quality may have a bigger influence.

Table 7.

Indirect effect of Instructional Competence on Academic Performance through Academic Study Load

Mediation Estimates						
			95% Confidence Interval			
Effect	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Z	p
Indirect	0.02	0.02	-0.02	0.05	0.80	.425
Direct	-0.09	0.03	-0.15	-0.03	3.07	.002
Total	-0.08	0.02	-0.12	-0.06	-3.62	< .001

Path Estimates								
					95% Confidence Interval			
			Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Z	p
Teachers' Instructional Competence	→	Academic Study Load	0.57	0.04	0.47	0.65	12.89	<.001
Academic Study Load	→	Academic Performance	0.03	0.05	-0.05	0.09	0.80	0.423

Path Estimates								
					95% Confidence Interval			
			Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Z	p
Teachers' Instructional Competence	→	Academic Performance	-0.09	0.03	-0.15	-0.03	3.07	0.002

Table 7 presents the mediation analysis examining whether academic study load explains the relationship between teachers' instructional competence and students' academic performance. The results show that the indirect effect is not statistically significant (β = 0.02, SE = 0.02, 95% CI [-0.02, 0.05], p = .425). This means that academic study load does not mediate the relationship between instructional competence and academic performance.

To understand this result, the conditions for mediation were examined. First, teachers' instructional competence significantly predicts academic study load (β = 0.57, p < .001). This indicates that more competent teachers tend to give students higher academic demands or workload. However, the second condition is not met because academic study load does not significantly predict academic performance (β = 0.03, p = .423). Since the mediator does not significantly affect the outcome variable, the mediation pathway is not completed.

Despite the lack of mediation, the direct effect of instructional competence on academic performance is significant and negative (β = −0.09, p = .002). Because the grading system is inverse-coded (lower values mean better performance), this indicates that higher instructional competence is associated with better academic performance. The total effect is also significant (β = −0.08, p < .001), showing that instructional competence has an overall influence on academic performance even without the mediation of academic study load.

This pattern suggests that academic study load does not serve as a mechanism through which instructional competence affects student performance. Instead, the influence of instructional competence appears to be direct rather than indirect.

This result is consistent with mediation theory, which states that a mediator must significantly relate to both the predictor and the outcome variable for mediation to occur (Hayes, 2022). In this study, the missing link is the relationship between academic study load and academic performance, which explains why mediation was not supported.

Supporting literature suggests that academic outcomes are more strongly influenced by how students process learning rather than workload alone. For example, Mayer (2021) explains that learning depends more on cognitive processing and understanding than on the amount of tasks given. In addition, Hattie (2023) found that teacher effectiveness has a direct impact on student achievement, but intermediate variables such as workload often do not fully explain this relationship.

On the other hand, research on self-regulated learning shows that students' ability to manage their own learning plays a stronger role in academic success than the amount of workload they receive. Zimmerman (2020) emphasized that self-regulation is a key factor in academic performance, which helps explain why academic study load did not act as a mediator in this study.

Overall, the findings indicate that academic study load does not explain how instructional competence affects academic performance. Instead, instructional competence has a direct effect, while other internal student factors may better explain academic success.

Synthesis of Findings

The findings of this study revealed a consistent pattern in the relationships among teachers' instructional competence, academic study load, and students' academic performance.

Overall, instructional competence plays a significant role in the learning process, but its influence on academic performance is mainly direct rather than indirect.

The results indicate that teachers' instructional competence is significantly associated with academic performance, although the effect is weak. At the same time, instructional competence has a strong influence on academic study load, suggesting that more competent teachers tend to give more structured and demanding learning tasks. However, academic study load does not significantly predict academic performance, indicating that study load alone is not enough to explain student outcomes.

Further analysis confirms that academic study load does not mediate the relationship between instructional competence and academic performance. While instructional competence directly affects academic performance, this effect is not transmitted through academic study load. This suggests that the impact of instructional competence operates directly on student outcomes rather than through increased study load.

Overall, the results suggest that academic performance is more strongly influenced by instructional competence than by academic study load. While competent instruction increases academic demands, these demands do not necessarily translate into higher performance. This implies that other factors, such as student learning strategies, motivation, and engagement, may play a more important role in explaining academic success.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

This study examined the relationships among teachers' instructional competence, students' academic study load, and students' academic performance in General Education Courses (GEC) within the Isabela State University System. It also investigated whether academic study load mediates the relationship between instructional competence and academic performance.

The findings revealed that teachers demonstrated a high level of instructional competence across all four dimensions: content mastery, pedagogical knowledge, classroom management, and instructional adaptability. Content mastery obtained the highest mean, while instructional adaptability obtained the lowest mean, although still interpreted as high. These results indicate that teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and effective classroom management, while adaptive instructional practices require further enhancement.

In terms of students' academic study load, results showed a high overall level of study load, indicating that academic demands are considerable but manageable. Students reported strong coping and adjustment strategies and adequate time management skills. However, academic stress and pressure were rated at a moderate level, suggesting that students experience some stress but are generally able to cope effectively.

For academic performance, students were generally classified within the fairly satisfactory to good range, indicating moderate academic achievement. Most students performed at average levels, with only a small proportion achieving high academic distinction.

Moreover, teachers' instructional competence significantly predicts academic study load, indicating that

higher instructional competence is associated with increased academic demands on students. It also shows a statistically significant but weak relationship with academic performance, suggesting a limited direct effect on student outcomes. Furthermore, Academic study load does not significantly predict academic performance, indicating that study load alone is not a strong determinant of achievement. Finally, academic study load does not mediate the relationship between instructional competence and academic performance, meaning it does not function as a pathway linking the two variables. These results indicate that academic performance is influenced by multiple interacting factors, including but not limited to instructional competence and academic study load.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Teachers demonstrate a high level of instructional competence in General Education Courses, particularly in content mastery and classroom management. However, instructional adaptability remains the least developed dimension, indicating the need for improved differentiated instruction.
2. Students experience a high academic study load but are generally able to manage it through effective coping strategies and time management skills. Academic pressure is present but remains within a tolerable level.
3. Students' academic performance is generally moderate, indicating that while most students achieve satisfactory outcomes, relatively few reach high academic excellence.
4. Teachers' instructional competence has a statistically significant but weak direct effect on students' academic performance. This suggests that academic achievement is influenced by multiple factors beyond instructional competence alone.
5. Teachers' instructional competence significantly increases students' academic study load, suggesting that more competent instruction is associated with more structured and demanding academic tasks.
6. Academic study load does not significantly influence academic performance, indicating that workload alone is not a strong determinant of academic success.
7. Academic study load does not mediate the relationship between instructional competence and academic performance. This indicates that instructional competence affects academic performance directly rather than indirectly through workload.

Overall, the findings confirm that academic performance is a multidimensional outcome influenced by instructional, cognitive, and learner-related factors.

Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

A. For Teachers

Teachers are encouraged to strengthen instructional adaptability by using differentiated instruction strategies that address diverse student needs. Additionally, instructional tasks should prioritize quality over quantity to promote deeper learning, critical thinking, and meaningful engagement.

B. For Isabela State University (ISU)

The university should implement faculty development programs focused on adaptive teaching strategies and student-centered instruction. It is also recommended that academic study load in General Education Courses be regularly reviewed to ensure balance and manageability. Furthermore, student support services such as academic advising, tutoring, and counseling should be strengthened.

C. For Curriculum Planners

Curriculum planners should develop policies that ensure balanced academic workload distribution across

General Education Courses. Flexible and learner-centered instructional frameworks should also be integrated into curriculum design to accommodate diverse learner needs.

D. For Future Researchers

Future studies should consider examining other mediating variables such as student motivation, academic engagement, and self-regulated learning. Longitudinal research designs are recommended to establish stronger causal relationships. Qualitative or mixed-method approaches may also be used to explore students lived academic experiences.

Proposed Policy Output

Based on the findings of this study, an Instructional and Academic Study Load Balance Policy for General Education Courses is proposed for implementation within the Isabela State University System. This policy is grounded on the results showing that teachers' instructional competence significantly predicts academic study load, while academic study load does not significantly predict academic performance and does not mediate the relationship between instructional competence and academic performance.

The proposed policy shall establish clear guidelines for the balanced distribution of academic workload across General Education Courses to ensure that learning tasks remain structured, meaningful, and manageable for students. It shall also define standards for instructional quality, with emphasis on strong content mastery, effective classroom management, and improved instructional adaptability to address diverse learner needs.

In addition, the policy shall include systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess students' academic workload, stress levels, and academic performance. These may include periodic workload reviews, student feedback systems, and instructional audits to ensure that academic demands are aligned with students' capacity to learn effectively.

Furthermore, the policy shall promote the strengthening of student-centered learning approaches that support active engagement, self-regulated learning, and effective learning strategies. Given that academic study load does not directly improve academic performance, greater emphasis shall be placed on enhancing instructional practices and student learning processes rather than increasing study load.

Overall, the implementation of this policy is expected to improve instructional quality, promote balanced academic demands, and support more effective learning conditions that enhance student academic performance in general education courses.

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