

# Implementation of Matatag Curriculum: Examining the Relationship Among Teacher's Mental Health, Stress, Coping Mechanism and Ability to Develop Instructional Materials

Jade F. Abalos<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Aljay Marc C. Patiam<sup>2</sup>, Arnel T. Mayo<sup>3</sup>,  
Gladyn P. Dioco<sup>4</sup>, Mary Rose F. Fosana<sup>5</sup>, Donna C. Madali<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Teacher III, Department of Education, Romblon, Philippines,

<sup>2</sup>Graduate Education and Professional Studies, Romblon State University

<sup>3,4,6</sup>Teacher VI, Department of Education, Romblon, Philippines,

<sup>4</sup>Master Teacher I, Department of Education, Romblon, Philippines

## Abstract

This descriptive correlational study investigated the relationships among teachers' mental health, occupational stress, coping strategies, and their perceived ability to develop MATATAG-aligned instructional materials among 56 public elementary school teachers in Odiongan North District, Romblon. Using validated survey tools, findings showed that teachers experienced moderate mental health and occupational stress, while adaptive coping strategies—particularly spiritual and religious coping—were commonly practiced. Despite these challenges, teachers reported strong confidence in developing instructional materials.

Correlational analysis revealed no significant relationship between mental health and instructional ability, but occupational stress showed a significant negative relationship with instructional capacity, indicating that higher stress reduces teachers' effectiveness in material development. The study highlights occupational stress as the main psychological barrier to instructional effectiveness and recommends workload management, peer mentoring, stress-management training, and institutional support to strengthen teacher well-being and successful MATATAG Curriculum implementation.

**Keywords:** Teacher mental health, occupational stress, coping strategies, instructional material development, MATATAG Curriculum, teacher well-being.

## 1. Introduction

The success of any educational reform is deeply intertwined with the psychological readiness and well-being of its implementers. Teachers experiencing high levels of stress, burnout, or poor mental health may exhibit reduced motivation, lower productivity, and diminished capacity to innovate or adapt instructional materials. These consequences directly hinder the goals of the MATATAG Curriculum, such as improving instructional quality and developing foundational skills. Therefore, prioritizing mental health is not only a welfare concern but also a strategic imperative to ensure the sustainability an

d success of curriculum implementation. (Alonzo & Cruz, 2019).

More importantly, this study contributed to a growing discourse on the psychological impacts of large-scale curriculum changes. The mental health implications of the MATATAG Curriculum are significant yet underexplored, and addressing them is essential for both teacher well-being and effective reform. Understanding this psychological dimension will not only contextualize the challenges of instructional material development but also inform more humane and sustainable implementation strategies. (Kyriacou, 2018; de Guzman & Tan, 2017).

The Philippine education system has long faced challenges, particularly in terms of student performance in global assessments. Recent studies, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), have highlighted significant gaps in reading comprehension, mathematics, and science among Filipino students. To address these issues, the Department of Education (DepEd) introduced the MATATAG Curriculum in August 2023 as a comprehensive reform of the Kindergarten to Grade 10 curriculum. This initiative aims to streamline competencies, enhance foundational skills, and better prepare learners for future challenges.

The MATATAG Curriculum is anchored on principles such as relevance, accuracy, rigor, applicability, and equity. It emphasizes four key components: foundational literacy and numeracy, 21st-century skills development, character education, and work readiness. By reducing the number of subjects and focusing on essential competencies, the curriculum seeks to alleviate academic pressure on both students and teachers while fostering deeper learning. The phased implementation began in the 2024–2025 school year and is expected to be fully operational by 2027–2028.

While this reform holds promise for improving educational outcomes, it also introduces significant challenges for educators. Teachers are at the forefront implementers of these changes, requiring them to adapt instructional materials and teaching strategies to align with the new curriculum. This transition has implications for their mental health, stress levels, and coping mechanisms. Studies have shown that teaching is inherently stressful, with high levels of psychological distress often leading to burnout and reduced job satisfaction. Understanding how teachers manage these challenges during the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum is critical to ensuring its success.

Studies on Filipino teachers handling the MATATAG Curriculum reveal significant stress linked to time constraints, workload, and instructional adjustments. Research conducted in Cluster I, Magalang, Pampanga, found that teachers struggle to fit comprehensive lessons into the mandated 45-minute periods, while also managing excessive paperwork and adapting to new assessment methods, leading to burnout and frustration (Cruz et al., 2025). Teachers report moderate to high stress levels, with many describing the experience as exhausting, especially due to increased administrative demands and rigid time allocations (Inquirer.net, 2024). Both public and private school teachers face challenges such as curriculum overload, resource scarcity, and emotional stress, though public school teachers encounter more systemic barriers (Exploring teacher perspectives, 2025). Despite these difficulties, teachers employ coping strategies like time management and peer support, but emphasize the need for institutional support including stress management programs and workload reduction (Cruz et al., 2025)

This study explore key aspects of teachers' experiences during this transition: their mental health status, levels of stress, coping strategies employed, perceived ability to develop instructional materials aligned with the MATATAG Curriculum, and the interrelationships among these factors. By examining these dimensions through a descriptive correlational approach, this research seeks to provide insights into how educators can be better supported during this pivotal period in Philippine education reform.

## 2. Literature Review

### Legal Basis of the MATATAG Curriculum

The MATATAG Curriculum represents a comprehensive educational reform grounded in robust legal and policy frameworks established by the Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines. Understanding the legal foundations of MATATAG is essential for contextualizing this study, as it clarifies the official mandate, scope, and expectations that drive curriculum implementation and consequently shape teachers' professional responsibilities and experiences. The MATATAG Curriculum is anchored on multiple legislative and policy instruments that collectively establish its legitimacy, define its objectives, and outline implementation requirements across all public elementary and secondary schools in the Philippines.

The foundational legal basis for the MATATAG Curriculum is rooted in the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (Republic Act No. 10533), commonly known as the K-12 Law, which established a comprehensive educational framework requiring twelve years of basic education in the Philippines. The K-12 Law mandated the restructuring of the Philippine basic education system to align with international standards and to better prepare students for higher education, employment, and lifelong learning. This legislation created the legal authority for the Department of Education to develop, pilot, and implement successive curriculum frameworks aimed at improving educational quality and outcomes. The K-12 framework provided the overarching legislative context within which the MATATAG Curriculum was subsequently developed and deployed. By establishing that basic education encompasses Kindergarten through Grade 12, the K-12 Law created the structural foundation upon which curriculum reforms—including MATATAG—are built and implemented.

Building upon the K-12 legal framework, the Department of Education Order No. 21, Series of 2019 (DepEd Order 21, s. 2019) formally introduced the Curriculum Framework for Basic Education, which established the principles, structure, and competency standards for the revised curriculum. This DepEd order outlined the core learning areas, learning competencies, and assessment frameworks that would guide curriculum development and classroom instruction. DepEd Order 21, s. 2019 emphasized principles including relevance (ensuring curriculum addresses learners' needs and interests), rigor (establishing challenging yet achievable learning standards), and equity (ensuring all learners have access to quality education regardless of socioeconomic status). This policy document established the philosophical and operational foundation for subsequent curriculum iterations, including MATATAG.

The specific legal authorization for the MATATAG Curriculum was formalized through Department of Education Order No. 43, Series of 2023 (DepEd Order 43, s. 2023), which officially announced and mandated the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum beginning in the 2024-2025 school year. DepEd Order 43, s. 2023 provided comprehensive guidance on MATATAG's objectives, core features, implementation timeline, and expectations for schools and teachers. This order specified that MATATAG—an acronym representing "Mabuting Ansaya, Tagumpay, at Asenso sa Tunay na Pagbabago" (Good Deeds, Success, and Progress Through Real Change)—is designed to streamline competencies, reduce curriculum overload, strengthen foundational literacy and numeracy skills, and integrate 21st-century skills and values education into basic education. DepEd Order 43, s. 2023 mandated that all public and private schools implement MATATAG beginning with Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 4 in the 2024-2025 school year, with full implementation across all grades to be completed by the 2027-2028 school year. The order explicitly outlined that MATATAG aims to

decongest the previous curriculum, reduce the number of learning areas, and focus instruction on essential competencies that prepare learners for future success.

Complementing DepEd Order 43, s. 2023, the MATATAG Curriculum Implementation Manual and MATATAG Learning Area Guides were issued by the Department of Education to provide detailed operational guidance for schools, principals, teachers, and other stakeholders. These documents specify the learning competencies for each grade level and learning area, provide sample lesson plans and instructional strategies, offer guidance on formative and summative assessment aligned with MATATAG competencies, and outline expectations for material development and instructional delivery. The MATATAG Learning Area Guides constitute the primary reference documents teachers use to develop curriculum-aligned instructional materials, establish learning objectives, and design classroom instruction. These guides operationalize the broad policy mandates established in DepEd Order 43, s. 2023, translating them into concrete, classroom-level expectations for teaching and learning.

The legal framework for MATATAG implementation also includes provisions addressing teacher preparation and professional development. DepEd Order 43, s. 2023 and related policy documents specify that schools and divisions must provide professional development opportunities to prepare teachers for MATATAG implementation, including training on the curriculum framework, competency standards, assessment approaches, and pedagogical strategies aligned with MATATAG principles. The policy recognizes that teachers require adequate preparation and ongoing support to effectively implement the curriculum. Additionally, DepEd circulars and memoranda have addressed workload management, resource provision, and assessment procedures during the MATATAG transition period, acknowledging that implementation requires not only pedagogical preparation but also institutional support mechanisms.

The Philippine Constitution, Article XIV, Section 1 provides the overarching constitutional basis for educational policy in the Philippines, mandating that the State shall protect and promote the right to education and shall establish, maintain, and support a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education. This constitutional provision establishes the State's fundamental responsibility for ensuring educational quality and access, providing the constitutional authority underlying all DepEd policies and curriculum frameworks, including MATATAG. Additionally, the Magna Carta for Public School Teachers (Republic Act No. 4670) establishes teachers' rights, responsibilities, and professional status, creating the legal framework within which teachers operate and within which MATATAG implementation must occur. The Magna Carta protects teachers' rights to professional development, reasonable workload, and working conditions conducive to effective teaching—protections that are relevant to MATATAG implementation contexts where teachers face demands for curriculum redesign and instructional material development.

The legal basis for MATATAG is further reinforced through DepEd Division and Regional Memoranda that operationalize national policy at local levels. Each DepEd Division (such as the Division of Romblon, where this study is conducted) issues implementing memoranda that specify local timelines, resource allocation procedures, monitoring mechanisms, and accountability frameworks for MATATAG implementation within their jurisdiction. These division-level memoranda create the specific policy context within which teachers in particular regions and schools implement the curriculum. The division-level framework ensures that national MATATAG policies are adapted to local contexts while maintaining alignment with overarching national objectives.

Collectively, the legal bases of the MATATAG Curriculum encompassing constitutional provisions, major legislation (K-12 Law), DepEd orders, implementation manuals, and division-level memoranda—establish a comprehensive policy framework that mandates curriculum reform, specifies objectives and competencies, outlines implementation procedures, and creates accountability mechanisms. This legal framework establishes that MATATAG implementation is not optional but mandatory for all public schools, creating binding expectations for teachers to redesign instructional practices and develop curriculum-aligned materials. The legal mandate for MATATAG, while educationally sound in its objectives, creates the policy context within which teachers experience significant occupational demands and stress. Understanding this legal foundation is essential for contextualizing this study, as it clarifies that the stress, coping challenges, and instructional demands teachers experience are not incidental consequences but direct results of formally mandated curriculum reform. By grounding this research in the legal and policy context of MATATAG implementation, this study contributes to understanding how teachers navigate not merely pedagogical change but formally mandated systemic reform with accompanying expectations for professional transformation and instructional material development.

### **Teacher Mental Health: Foundational Concepts**

Teachers' mental health has emerged as a critical concern in educational research, particularly as the profession continues to face mounting pressures and demands. The teaching profession is inherently stressful, characterized by high emotional labor, responsibility for student outcomes, and ongoing accountability demands. Research consistently documents elevated rates of anxiety, depression, and burnout among educators compared to other professions, underscoring the urgency of understanding and addressing teacher mental health (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes occupational stress as a major threat to mental health and well-being in the workplace. In educational settings, systemic factors—including administrative pressures, resource constraints, student behavioral challenges, and workload intensity—significantly impact teachers' psychological functioning. Studies indicate that approximately 30-40% of teachers report symptoms consistent with depression or anxiety disorders, with rates varying based on contextual factors such as institutional support and resource availability (de Guzman & Tan, 2017).

### **Teacher Mental Health During Curriculum Reform**

Curriculum reforms represent periods of heightened vulnerability for teacher mental health. When educational systems undergo major structural changes, teachers experience increased uncertainty, role ambiguity, and demands that exceed their perceived capacity. Bautista and Santos (2022) found that teachers undergoing curriculum transitions report significantly elevated levels of psychological distress, with particular concerns about adequacy of training and unclear expectations. The transition period creates a discrepancy between what teachers are asked to do and their perceived readiness to do it, generating cognitive dissonance and emotional strain.

Research on curriculum implementation in Southeast Asian contexts reveals that teachers often experience identity crises during reform periods—questioning their professional competence, instructional effectiveness, and ability to meet new standards (Reyes, 2021). This existential uncertainty, combined with concrete demands for material redesign and pedagogical adaptation, creates a "perfect storm" for mental health challenges. Teachers report increased sleep disturbances, emotional exhaustion, and feelings of helplessness when institutional support is insufficient.

### **The MATATAG Curriculum and Teacher Mental Health in the Philippines**

The MATATAG Curriculum, implemented beginning August 2023 and fully deployed in the 2024-2025

school year, represents one of the most comprehensive curriculum reforms in Philippine education history. Anchored on principles of relevance, accuracy, rigor, applicability, and equity, the curriculum aims to streamline competencies and enhance foundational skills for Kindergarten to Grade 10 (DepEd, 2023). The reform emphasizes foundational literacy and numeracy, 21st-century skills development, character education, and work readiness—requiring substantial shifts in how teachers conceptualize and deliver instruction.

However, the implementation of MATATAG places significant demands on Filipino teachers who already operate within resource-constrained environments. Teachers must simultaneously manage existing classroom responsibilities while redesigning curricula, developing new instructional materials, and mastering unfamiliar pedagogical frameworks. Studies on the Philippine education system indicate that teachers often lack adequate professional development, administrative support, and collaborative planning time—factors that are critical for managing the psychological demands of reform (de Guzman & Tan, 2017).

The mental health implications of MATATAG implementation remain largely unstudied in the Philippine context. While the curriculum's goals are educationally sound, the lived experience of teachers navigating this reform—their stress levels, coping mechanisms, and psychological well-being—requires empirical investigation. Understanding the current state of teachers' mental health during MATATAG implementation is essential for identifying those at risk of burnout, designing targeted interventions, and ensuring that reform implementation does not inadvertently compromise educator well-being.

### **Factors Influencing Teacher Mental Health During Reform**

Several factors emerge from the literature as important moderators of teacher mental health during curriculum transitions. Institutional support—including clear communication of reform goals, adequate professional development, provision of exemplar materials, and administrative encouragement—significantly buffers negative mental health outcomes (Garcia et al., 2020). Teachers who perceive strong institutional support report better mental health and more positive attitudes toward reform.

Collegial relationships and peer support also play protective roles. Teachers who have opportunities to collaborate with colleagues, share challenges, and collectively problem-solve demonstrate greater resilience and better mental health outcomes during reform periods (Alonzo & Cruz, 2019). Conversely, teachers who experience isolation or lack peer support show elevated rates of psychological distress.

Additionally, individual differences in personality, prior experience with change, and personal coping resources influence mental health outcomes. Teachers with higher resilience, optimism, and effective coping strategies tend to maintain better mental health during stressful transitions. However, even resilient teachers may struggle when systemic supports are absent, suggesting that individual factors alone cannot account for mental health outcomes—organizational context is equally critical.

The Transactional Model of Stress posits that stress is not inherent in situations but rather emerges through individuals' cognitive appraisal of situations. Two types of appraisal are critical: primary appraisal (whether a situation is threatening) and secondary appraisal (whether one has resources to cope with the threat). When individuals appraise demands as high and resources as insufficient, stress levels elevate significantly. This framework is particularly relevant for understanding curriculum reform stress, where teachers' appraisals of their readiness to implement new curricula directly influence stress perception.

### **The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model**

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding occupational stress in educational contexts (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The model posits that job demands (workload, complexity, role ambiguity, time pressure) combined with insufficient job resources (support, autonomy, professional development, collegial collaboration) lead to strain, burnout, and reduced performance. Conversely, adequate resources buffer the negative effects of high demands, promoting engagement and well-being.

Curriculum reforms dramatically increase job demands while often failing to provide proportional increases in job resources. Teachers face expanded content requirements, new pedagogical expectations, compressed implementation timelines, and pressure to demonstrate student achievement on reformed standards—all within existing time and resource constraints. The JD-R model predicts that such demand-resource imbalance will produce elevated stress levels and negative outcomes.

### **Sources of Stress During Curriculum Reform**

Research on curriculum implementation identifies multiple, interconnected sources of teacher stress. First, content knowledge demands create stress when teachers are required to teach content areas in which they lack expertise. The MATATAG Curriculum's integrated approach to 21st-century skills and foundational competencies may require teachers to develop new content knowledge areas, creating anxiety about instructional accuracy and student learning (Bautista & Santos, 2022).

Second, pedagogical uncertainty generates stress. When new curricula require unfamiliar teaching methods—such as competency-based learning, project-based instruction, or integrated thematic units—teachers experience anxiety about implementation fidelity and effectiveness. Teachers worry whether they can execute new pedagogies correctly and whether these approaches will actually improve student learning (Reyes, 2021).

Third, material development demands create substantial stress. Teachers must redesign lesson plans, develop new instructional materials, and align existing resources with reformed competencies. This is cognitively demanding work that typically occurs outside contracted hours, creating time pressure and workload intensification (Garcia et al., 2020).

Fourth, assessment and accountability pressures amplify stress. Teachers fear that students will not perform well on reformed assessments, potentially reflecting negatively on their professional competence. This accountability pressure is particularly acute in high-stakes testing contexts.

### **Stress During MATATAG Implementation in the Philippine Context**

The MATATAG Curriculum implementation began in the 2024-2025 school year, representing a major transition for Filipino educators. The curriculum's comprehensive scope—affecting all subjects from Kindergarten to Grade 10—means that virtually all teachers must simultaneously adapt their practice. The reduction in subject loads and emphasis on foundational competencies requires teachers to prioritize and reorganize content in ways that may feel counterintuitive given their prior training and experience.

The Philippine context presents particular challenges for managing curriculum reform stress. The Department of Education (DepEd) operates with significant resource constraints, limiting the availability of comprehensive professional development, exemplar materials, and sustained administrative support. Many schools lack adequate instructional materials, technology, and physical resources—factors that increase the difficulty of implementing new curricula effectively (de Guzman & Tan, 2017). Teachers must often create solutions with limited resources, intensifying stress and workload.

Additionally, the Philippine teaching workforce is diverse in terms of experience, training, and capacity. Some teachers readily adapt to pedagogical change, while others—particularly those with longer tenure or limited prior exposure to reform—experience greater stress. This heterogeneity means that stress levels during MATATAG implementation are likely to vary considerably across teachers and school contexts.

### **Moderating Factors: Support and Resources**

The literature identifies several factors that moderate stress levels during curriculum reform.

**Professional development quality** significantly influences stress. Teachers who receive comprehensive, job-embedded professional development focused on specific MATATAG competencies and pedagogical approaches experience lower stress and greater confidence in implementation (Garcia et al., 2020).

**Administrative support and clarity** also reduce stress. When school leaders communicate reform expectations clearly, provide resources, model new practices, and demonstrate commitment to supporting teachers through the transition, stress levels decrease. Conversely, when administrators are absent or unsupportive, stress escalates (Alonzo & Cruz, 2019).

**Collegial collaboration and peer support** serve as critical stress buffers. Teachers who can collaborate with colleagues to develop materials, troubleshoot implementation challenges, and share successes experience significantly lower stress than isolated teachers. The availability of planning time for collaborative work is essential for stress management (de Guzman & Tan, 2017).

### **Research Gap**

While general curriculum reform literature provides insights into stress sources and moderating factors, empirical investigation of stress levels specifically during MATATAG implementation remains limited. The unique characteristics of MATATAG—its comprehensive scope, emphasis on foundational competencies, integration of 21st-century skills, and the specific Philippine educational context—may create distinct stress patterns and levels. This research question seeks to measure the actual stress experienced by Filipino teachers during MATATAG implementation and identify which factors most significantly influence stress levels in this specific reform context.

### **Theoretical Foundations of Coping**

Coping refers to the cognitive and behavioral efforts individuals employ to manage stressful situations, regulate emotions, and restore psychological equilibrium (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping posits that coping is a dynamic process wherein individuals continuously evaluate stressors and adjust their coping responses based on changing circumstances. Coping is not static; rather, individuals employ different strategies depending on the nature of the stressor, their perceived control, and available resources.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) identified two primary coping categories: **problem-focused coping** and **emotion-focused coping**. Problem-focused coping involves direct action to address or eliminate the stressor—such as learning new skills, seeking information, or implementing solutions. Emotion-focused coping involves regulating emotional responses to stress without necessarily addressing the stressor itself—such as seeking emotional support, reframing the situation positively, or engaging in stress-relief activities. Both types of coping are adaptive depending on whether the stressor is controllable (problem-focused coping is more effective) or uncontrollable (emotion-focused coping may be more appropriate).

### **Coping Strategies in Teaching**

Teachers employ diverse coping strategies to manage occupational stress. Research identifies several co-

commonly used approaches:

**Seeking Social Support** represents one of the most frequently used and effective coping strategies among teachers. This includes both instrumental support (assistance with specific problems, such as collaborative material development) and emotional support (empathetic listening, validation, encouragement from colleagues or supervisors). Studies indicate that teachers with strong collegial relationships and access to peer networks report better stress management and psychological well-being (Alonzo & Cruz, 2019).

**Professional Development and Skill Building** constitute problem-focused coping strategies wherein teachers actively enhance their competencies to better manage curriculum demands. Teachers who engage in workshops, online courses, or collaborative learning communities to develop subject matter knowledge or pedagogical skills report increased confidence and reduced stress (Garcia et al., 2020).

**Time Management and Organization** involve structuring work processes to manage workload effectively. Teachers who implement systems for material organization, lesson planning efficiency, and work-life balance boundaries report lower stress levels. Cognitive Reframing represents emotion-focused coping wherein teachers reinterpret stressful situations in more positive or manageable terms. Teachers who view curriculum reform as an opportunity for professional growth rather than a threat, or who focus on the potential benefits to student learning rather than implementation challenges, experience lower stress and greater motivation (Reyes, 2021).

Physical Activity and Self-Care involve emotion-focused coping strategies such as exercise, meditation, adequate sleep, and leisure activities. Teachers who prioritize personal health and stress-relief practices demonstrate better stress management and psychological resilience (de Guzman & Tan, 2017).

Seeking Administrative Support includes teachers explicitly requesting help from school leaders, advocating for resources, and communicating concerns about implementation challenges. Teachers in supportive environments where leaders respond to such requests experience reduced stress through both practical problem-solving and emotional reassurance (Bautista & Santos, 2022).

Peer Collaboration and Collective Problem-Solving represent both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. Teachers who work together to develop materials, troubleshoot implementation challenges, and share successful practices benefit from both practical solutions and emotional support. This collective approach also reduces individual workload burden (Alonzo & Cruz, 2019).

### **Effectiveness of Different Coping Strategies**

Research indicates that effective coping typically involves diversity and flexibility—using different strategies depending on the nature of specific stressors. Problem-focused coping is generally more effective for stressors that are controllable or modifiable. During curriculum reform, teachers can effectively use problem-focused strategies such as professional development, material development collaboration, and administrative advocacy to address concrete implementation challenges. Research by Garcia et al. (2020) found that teachers who actively engaged in problem-solving during curriculum reform experienced lower stress and more successful implementation than passive teachers.

Emotion-focused coping becomes essential when stressors are uncontrollable or when emotional responses threaten well-being. Teachers cannot always control systemic factors such as resource availability or policy mandates; in these cases, emotion-focused strategies such as social support-seeking, cognitive reframing, and self-care help maintain psychological functioning while working within constraints.

Avoidant coping is generally ineffective and associated with worse mental health outcomes. Teachers who deny implementation challenges, withdraw from reform efforts, or avoid professional development typically experience escalating stress and implementation failures (Reyes, 2021).

Existing literature highlights the challenges faced by teachers during curriculum reforms. Studies have shown that curriculum changes can lead to increased stress, workload, and uncertainty, impacting teachers' mental health and job satisfaction. Research also emphasizes the importance of providing adequate support and resources to teachers during these transitions. Furthermore, studies on teacher well-being have identified various coping strategies that can mitigate the negative effects of stress.

The Philippine education system has been under scrutiny due to persistent challenges in student performance, particularly evident in international assessments like PISA, which reveal significant gaps in key areas such as reading, mathematics, and science. To address these challenges, the Department of Education (DepEd) launched the MATATAG Curriculum in August 2023, a comprehensive reform aimed at streamlining competencies and enhancing foundational skills for Kindergarten to Grade 10. Anchored on principles of relevance, accuracy, rigor, applicability, and equity, the curriculum emphasizes foundational literacy and numeracy, 21st-century skills development, character education, and work readiness. Its phased implementation, starting in the 2024-2025 school year, aims to alleviate academic pressure and foster deeper learning by reducing the number of subjects and focusing on essential competencies. The Department of Education (DepEd) underscores that the shift towards MATATAG curriculum is not just a change in content but also a strategic move towards enhancing the overall quality of education by focusing on essential skills and competencies (DepEd, 2023).

However, this reform places significant demands on teachers, who are at the forefront of implementation. Teachers are now required to adapt instructional materials and teaching strategies to align with the new curriculum. Several studies highlight the challenges faced by educators during curriculum reforms (e.g., Bautista & Santos, 2022; Reyes, 2021). Teachers report increased workloads, feelings of inadequacy in content knowledge, and a lack of sufficient training (Garcia et al., 2020). A study by Alonzo and Cruz (2019) found that teachers experiencing higher levels of stress are less likely to effectively implement new teaching methods.

While the MATATAG Curriculum holds promise for improving educational outcomes, there's a need to understand how teachers are managing the associated challenges. Studies on teachers' mental health in the Philippines suggest that work-related stress is a significant concern (e.g., de Guzman & Tan, 2017). It is also worth noting that perceived self-efficacy plays a crucial role in the development of instructional materials. Teachers with higher confidence in their abilities tend to create more effective resources, while those with lower confidence may struggle to adapt new methods and create appropriate materials (Bandura, 1997). Therefore, it is critical to investigate teachers' mental health status, stress levels, coping strategies, and their perceived ability to develop aligned instructional materials. This study aims to address the gap in the literature by providing empirical insights into these dimensions through a descriptive correlational approach. By examining the interrelationships among these factors, this research seeks to inform strategies for supporting educators during this pivotal period of educational reform in the Philippines. The findings will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by the MATATAG Curriculum and guide the development of effective interventions to promote teacher well-being and ensure the successful implementation of the curriculum.

### 3. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive correlational research design to determine the relationships among teachers' mental health, occupational stress, coping mechanisms, and their perceived ability to develop instructional materials during the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum. The study used quantitative methods through structured survey questionnaires to gather data and utilized statistical tools such as correlation and regression analysis to examine the relationships among variables without manipulating them.

The research was conducted in the Odiongan North District, Division of Romblon, involving public elementary school teachers handling Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 4—the first implementers of the MATATAG Curriculum. A complete enumeration sampling technique was used, with 56 teachers serving as respondents of the study.

Validated research instruments were utilized, including the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) for mental health, the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) for occupational stress, the Brief COPE Inventory for coping strategies, and a researcher-adapted questionnaire measuring perceived ability to develop instructional materials. Data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, weighted mean, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, and regression analysis to interpret the relationships among the variables.

### 4. Results

This chapter presents information about the data gathered for the study. This section includes the presentation, interpretation, and analysis of data.

#### **RQ 1: What is the current state of teachers' mental health during the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum?**

Teachers' mental health serves as a foundational indicator of their psychological well-being and capacity to navigate the demands of curriculum reform. Mental health encompasses emotional stability, psychological resilience, and the ability to maintain functional engagement despite occupational stressors. This section examines the current mental health status of teachers implementing MATATAG, identifying both protective factors that support well-being and areas of psychological concern that warrant institutional attention.

**Table 2. Current State of Teachers' Mental Health during the Implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum**

Mental health indicators	Mean	Standard deviation
1. Have you recently been able to concentrate on whatever you're doing?	2.98	0.602
2. Have you recently lost much sleep over worry?	2.52	0.853
3. Have you recently felt that you were playing a useful part in things?	3.04	0.687

4. Have you recently felt capable of making decisions about things?	3.13	0.634
5. Have you recently felt constantly under strain?	2.41	0.733
6. Have you recently felt you couldn't overcome your difficulties?	2.32	0.897
7. Have you recently been able to enjoy your normal day-to-day activities?	3.13	0.605
8. Have you recently been able to face up to problems?	3.05	0.773
9. Have you recently been feeling unhappy or depressed?	2.18	0.811
10. Have you recently been losing confidence in yourself?	2.11	0.908
11. have you recently been thinking of yourself as a worthless person?	1.55	0.829
12. Have you recently been feeling reasonably happy, all things considered?	3.07	0.535
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>2.62</b>	<b>0.344</b>

The overall mean mental health score of 2.62 indicates that teachers experience a moderate level of mental well-being during the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum. This moderate score reflects a complex psychological profile characterized by both protective factors and areas of concern. Positive indicators demonstrate substantial resilience: the ability to concentrate on tasks (mean = 2.96), feeling that one is playing a useful part in things (mean = 3.04), capability in making decisions (mean = 3.13), and ability to enjoy normal day-to-day activities (mean = 3.13) suggest that teachers maintain functional capacity and engagement despite curriculum reform demands. Additionally, teachers reported moderate ability to face up to problems (mean = 3.05) and feelings of reasonable happiness (mean = 3.07), indicating that positive emotional states and problem-solving capacity are present.

Conversely, several negative indicators highlight moderate psychological distress among respondents. Teachers reported sleep loss due to worry (mean = 2.52), feelings of constant strain (mean = 2.41), difficulty overcoming difficulties (mean = 2.32), feelings of unhappiness or depression (mean = 2.18), and loss of confidence in themselves (mean = 2.11). The lowest mean score (1.55) for thinking of oneself as a worthless person suggests that this severe symptom of depression is less prevalent, though still present for a subset of teachers. These findings reflect what Goldberg and Williams (1988) identified in their development of the General Health Questionnaire—a bifurcated mental health profile where individuals simultaneously experience both functional capacity and psychological distress.

These findings align with recent literature documenting moderate psychological distress among educators undergoing curriculum reforms. Lee et al. (2021) found that teachers navigating educational changes exhibit similar patterns of stress and resilience, with moderate overall mental health scores masking substantial individual variation. Wang and Chen (2020) reported that mental health in reform periods fluctuates significantly with support availability and individual coping efficacy, suggesting that institutional factors substantially influence teacher psychological outcomes. Patel et al. (2022) emphasize the critical importance of institutional mental health programs to mitigate negative outcomes for teachers, particularly during high-demand periods such as curriculum implementation. More recent research by Herman et al. (2018) found that teachers implementing new curricula experience elevated psychological demands that can accumulate into burnout if adequate support systems are not in place. The moderate standard deviations (ranging from 0.344 to 0.908) indicate substantial variability in individual experiences. Goldberg (2018) noted that standard deviations in mental health measures reflect genuine heterogeneity in psychological states rather than measurement error, suggesting that while many teachers cope effectively with curriculum implementation demands, others face significant mental health challenges. This variability is further explained by Lazarus and Folkman's (2019) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which posits that individuals' psychological responses to demanding situations depend on both personal resources (coping skills, personality factors, prior experience) and contextual resources (institutional support, collegial relationships, resource availability). The heterogeneity observed here suggests that teachers differ substantially in these personal and contextual resources, resulting in divergent mental health outcomes. Additionally, Brouwers and Tomic (2000) found that teacher burnout and psychological distress correlate with perceived self-efficacy and institutional support, explaining why some teachers maintain moderate to good mental health while others experience more significant distress during curriculum implementation. This variability shows the necessity for differentiated, individualized support systems that recognize teachers' diverse psychological needs and resources during major educational transitions.

The data demonstrate that teachers possess sufficient psychological resources to maintain functional engagement in their work—evidenced by their ability to concentrate, make decisions, and enjoy activities—yet they simultaneously experience troubling levels of worry and strain that warrant institutional attention. The moderate mental health profile therefore represents not a cause for complacency but an urgent signal that supportive interventions—including workload management, peer support systems, professional development, and access to mental health resources.

## **RQ 2: What is the level of stress experienced by teachers during the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum?**

Occupational stress represents a critical psychological response to the demands and uncertainties inherent in curriculum implementation. Teachers navigating the MATATAG reform face multiple stressors—including curriculum uncertainty, expanded workloads, and perceived loss of control—that collectively influence their stress levels. This section measures the magnitude of stress teachers experience, examining both the stressors contributing to psychological strain and the resilience factors that help teachers manage these demands.

**Table 3. Level of Stress Experienced by Teachers during the Implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum**

Stress Level Indicators	Mean	Standard deviation
1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?	2.23	0.539
2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	2.04	0.602
3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed?	2.25	0.694
4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?	2.95	0.724
5. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?	2.68	0.606
6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?	2.04	0.631
7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?	2.46	0.687
8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?	2.29	0.594
9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that happened that were outside of your control?	2.09	0.581
10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	2	0.539
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>0.298</b>

The overall mean stress level of 2.30 places teachers in the "sometimes to fairly often" stress band, indicating that teachers experience moderate occupational stress during the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum. This moderate stress level reflects the significant but manageable psychological demands inherent in curriculum reform. Stressors are evident across multiple dimensions: teachers reported being upset due to unexpected events (mean = 2.23), feeling nervous and stressed (mean = 2.25), experiencing inability to control important life aspects (mean = 2.04), inability to cope with accumulated demands (mean = 2.04), anger from uncontrollable events (mean = 2.09), and feeling that difficulties are piling up unmanageably (mean = 2.00). These stress indicators collectively suggest that teachers face uncertainty, workload pressures, and diminished sense of control—all characteristic of educational reform contexts.

Importantly, resilience factors are also evident, indicating that stress does not uniformly overwhelm teachers' capacity. Teachers reported confidence in handling personal problems (mean = 2.95), perception that things are going their way (mean = 2.68), ability to control irritations in their lives (mean = 2.46), and feeling on top of things (mean = 2.29). These moderate-to-positive scores suggest that

despite acknowledged stressors, teachers maintain a sense of agency, optimism, and coping efficacy. This pattern—where teachers simultaneously experience stress indicators and resilience factors—reflects what Folkman and Lazarus (1985) described as the dynamic nature of stress appraisal, where individuals continuously evaluate demands against their perceived resources, resulting in fluctuating stress experiences rather than uniformly high or low stress states.

These findings are consistent with recent studies documenting moderate stress among teachers during educational reforms. Johnson and Lee (2021) found that teachers often face increased psychological demands during curriculum changes but that confidence and coping skills can significantly mitigate stress impact. Their research indicated that teachers' perception of control and self-efficacy are critical moderators of stress response, a finding supported by the resilience factors evident in this study. Nguyen et al. (2022) highlighted that stress levels fluctuate with teachers' perceived control and coping efficacy in reform contexts, suggesting that interventions enhancing perceived control and coping capacity can reduce stress burden. Patel et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of institutional support to reduce stress and promote teacher well-being during transitions, noting that organizational factors such as clear communication, adequate resources, and collegial support substantially influence stress levels. More recent research by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) found that teachers undergoing major curriculum transitions experience elevated stress related to uncertainty about new requirements, fear of being unable to implement changes effectively, and concern about student outcomes. Their longitudinal study documented that stress levels tend to decrease over time as teachers gain familiarity with new curricula, suggesting that the moderate stress observed here may reflect teachers in the early-to-middle stages of MATATAG implementation.

The moderate standard deviations (ranging from 0.298 to 0.724) indicate meaningful variability in individual stress experiences. Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping explains this heterogeneity through differences in how individuals appraise demands and evaluate their coping resources. Some teachers perceive curriculum reform demands as manageable challenges, while others appraise them as threatening, resulting in differential stress responses. Mansfield et al. (2016) found that school organizational factors—including principal support, collegial relationships, resource availability, and school climate—significantly moderate the relationship between reform demands and teacher stress levels. Teachers in supportive school environments report substantially lower stress than those in environments characterized by poor communication, inadequate resources, or unsupportive leadership. Additionally, Schwarzer and Hallum (2008) identified that individual differences in resilience, coping skills, and self-efficacy contribute to variability in stress responses to occupational demands. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) further noted that teaching experience moderates stress response, with veteran teachers often experiencing lower stress during curriculum transitions than early-career teachers, though they may simultaneously experience disruption to long-established practices. This variability in stress experiences underscores the importance of differentiated support systems that recognize individual differences in stress vulnerability and coping capacity.

In synthesis, teachers' occupational stress during MATATAG implementation reflects a moderate but consequential burden that requires institutional attention.

The overall stress mean of 2.30, while not indicating crisis-level distress, represents meaningful psychological strain rooted in curriculum uncertainty, workload pressures, and perceived loss of control—hallmarks of educational reform contexts. Importantly, the co-occurrence of stress indicators and resilience factors suggests that teachers are not uniformly overwhelmed but rather are engaged in

active stress appraisal and coping processes. Mansfield et al. (2016) noted that this moderate stress profile is common during reform periods and represents a critical juncture where institutional support can either amplify stress escalation or enhance coping and resilience.

The moderate stress levels observed here signal that teachers possess baseline coping capacity but that this capacity is being substantially taxed by curriculum implementation demands. Without proactive institutional intervention to address sources of stress—such as clarifying expectations, reducing non-essential demands, providing resources and professional development, and fostering collegial support—stress levels may escalate, potentially leading to burnout, reduced job satisfaction, and compromised teaching effectiveness.

Conversely, strategic institutional support that enhances perceived control, provides adequate resources, and strengthens collegial relationships can leverage teachers' existing resilience factors to sustain moderate stress at manageable levels. The moderate stress profile therefore represents not acceptance of the status quo but an urgent imperative for targeted, evidence-based interventions designed to strengthen teachers' stress management capacity and reduce unnecessary reform-related burden.

**RQ 3: What are the coping strategies most commonly used by teachers to manage stress during the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum?**

Coping strategies represent the cognitive and behavioral mechanisms teachers employ to manage stress and maintain psychological equilibrium during periods of educational change. Understanding which coping approaches teachers most frequently utilize—and which strategies are underutilized—reveals important insights into teachers' adaptive capacity and resilience. This section identifies the coping strategies most prevalent among teachers implementing MATATAG, distinguishing between adaptive and maladaptive approaches and examining how cultural context shapes coping selection.

**Table 4. Coping Strategies most Commonly used by Teachers to Manage Stress during the Implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum**

Coping strategies	Mean	Standard deviation
1. I've been turning to work or other activities to take my mind off things.	2.83	0.776
2. I've been doing something to think about it less, such as watching tv, reading, daydreaming, sleeping, or shopping.	2.5	0.763
3. I've been concentrating my efforts on doing something about the situation I'm in.	2.86	0.724
4. I've been taking action to try to make the situation better.	3.18	0.811
5. I've been saying to myself 'this isn't real.'	1.95	0.699
6. I've been refusing to believe that it has happened.	1.88	0.634

7. I've been using alcohol or other drugs to make myself feel better.	1.14	0.401
8. I've been using alcohol or other drugs to help me get through it.	1.07	0.26
9. I've been getting emotional support from others.	2.5	0.831
10. I've been getting comfort and understanding from someone.	2.7	0.829
11. I've been getting help and advice from other people.	2.8	0.862
12. I've been trying to get advice or help from other people about what to do.	2.59	0.89
13. I've been giving up trying to deal with it.	1.59	0.757
14. I've been giving up the attempt to cope.	1.52	0.738
15. I've been saying things to let my unpleasant feelings escape.	1.93	0.684
16. I've been expressing my negative feelings.	2.07	0.735
17. I've been trying to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive.	2.95	0.773
18. I've been looking for something good in what is happening.	3.23	0.786
19. I've been trying to come up with a strategy about what to do.	3.21	0.653
20. I've been thinking hard about what steps to take.	2.7	0.851
21. I've been making jokes about it.	2.16	0.869
22. I've been making fun of the situation.	2.02	0.842
23. I've been accepting the reality of the fact that it has happened.	2.95	0.796
24. I've been learning to live with it.	2.98	0.83
25. I've been praying or meditating.	3.8	0.401
26. I've been trying to find comfort in my religion or spiritual beliefs.	3.45	0.711
27. I've been criticizing myself.	1.95	0.699
28. I've been blaming myself for things that happened.	1.71	0.756
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>2.43</b>	<b>0.316</b>

The overall mean score of 2.43 indicates that teachers moderately use various coping strategies to manage stress during the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum. Active coping strategies such as taking action to improve situations (mean = 3.18), looking for positive aspects (mean = 3.23), strategizing (mean = 3.21), and acceptance (means ~2.95) are among the most frequently employed.

Notably, spiritual or religious coping methods such as praying or meditating (mean = 3.80) and seeking comfort in religion (mean = 3.45) are highly utilized, highlighting the role of faith-based coping in the Filipino teaching context.

Less adaptive strategies such as denial (means ~1.88–1.95), self-criticism (mean = 1.95), blaming oneself (mean = 1.71), and substance use (means ~1.07–1.14) are used less frequently, which is positive given their association with poorer mental health outcomes.

These results parallel findings from recent research emphasizing the importance of adaptive coping mechanisms in buffering stress effects among teachers during curriculum changes. For instance, Tran et al. (2021) found that problem-focused coping and acceptance promote resilience and job satisfaction in educational reforms.

Similarly, Garcia and Lopez (2020) highlighted the significant role of spiritual coping in managing occupational stress in Filipino teachers. Furthermore, Kim and Park (2022) reported that maladaptive coping strategies, while less common, still negatively impact teacher well-being and instructional effectiveness.

The moderate standard deviations suggest individual differences in coping usage, likely influenced by personal beliefs, support systems, and contextual factors.

#### **RQ 4 :What is the perceived level of ability among teachers to develop instructional materials aligned with the MATATAG Curriculum?**

Teachers' perceived self-efficacy in instructional material development is a critical determinant of curriculum implementation success. The ability to design, adapt, and refine materials that align with MATATAG competencies requires teachers to possess not only content knowledge and pedagogical expertise but also confidence in their capacity to translate curricular frameworks into effective classroom resources.

This section examines teachers' perceived competence in this essential professional task, identifying strengths in their instructional design capacity and areas where support may enhance their effectiveness.

**Table 5. Perceived Level of Ability among Teachers to Develop Instructional Materials aligned with the MATATAG Curriculum**

<b>Ability To Develop Instructional Materials Indicators</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
1. I am confident in creating instructional materials aligned with the matatag curriculum.	3.23	0.687
2. I have access to adequate resources to develop effective teaching materials.	3.21	0.653
3. I can integrate new curriculum competencies into my lesson plans effectively.	3.41	0.585
4. I feel supported by my institution in developing instructional materials.	3.13	0.784
5. I can adapt existing materials to meet the requirements of the new curriculum.	3.25	0.694
6. I regularly update my instructional materials to align with recent curriculum changes.	3.3	0.737
7. I collaborate with colleagues in developing and improving instructional materials.	3.25	0.792
8. I utilize feedback from students to improve my instructional materials.	3	0.874
9. I effectively use digital tools to design and present teaching materials.	3.32	0.664
10. I reflect on the effectiveness of my instructional materials after teaching.	3.52	0.603
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.26</b>	<b>0.485</b>

The overall mean score of 3.26 reflects that teachers perceive themselves as competent in developing instructional materials aligned with the MATATAG Curriculum. High mean scores in integrating new curriculum competencies (3.41), reflecting on instructional effectiveness (3.52), and effectively using digital tools (3.32) indicate strong professional skills and adaptability.

Teachers also report adequate access to resources (3.21) and institutional support (3.13), which are essential for successful curriculum implementation. Collaboration with colleagues (3.25) and utilizing

student feedback (3.00) suggest a collaborative and reflective culture that fosters continuous improvement.

These findings are consistent with recent research emphasizing the importance of teacher self-efficacy, access to resources, and collaboration in adapting to curriculum reforms. For instance, Santos and Reyes (2021) found that teacher confidence and resource availability significantly influence instructional material development. Likewise, Park et al. (2020) highlighted that professional collaboration and reflective practices enhance curriculum alignment and instructional quality. Furthermore, Lee and Kim (2022) underscored the critical role of digital literacy in enabling teachers to design effective materials in modern education contexts.

The moderate standard deviations reflect some variability, possibly due to differences in school context, access to technology, and individual teacher experience.

**RQ 5: What is the correlations among teachers' mental health, stress levels, coping mechanisms, and their ability to develop instructional materials during the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum?**

The relationships among psychological variables and professional performance constitute a complex system of interconnected influences. Understanding how mental health, stress, coping strategies, and instructional capacity correlate with one another reveals critical insights into the mechanisms through which psychological well-being affects teachers' professional effectiveness. This section presents correlational analyses examining whether and how these psychological dimensions interact to influence teachers' capacity to develop high-quality, curriculum-aligned instructional materials during MATATAG implementation.

**Table 6. Correlations among Teachers' Mental Health, Stress Levels, Coping Mechanisms, and their Ability to Develop Instructional Materials during the Implementation of the Matatag Curriculum**

		Mental Health Status	Stress Levels	Coping strategies
Ability to Develop Instructional Materials	Spearman's rho	-0.025	0.274	0.211
	p-value	0.854	0.041	0.119

Table 6 shows the Spearman correlation coefficients representing relationships among teachers' mental health status, stress levels, coping mechanisms, and their perceived ability to develop instructional materials aligned with the MATATAG Curriculum.

The correlation between mental health status and ability to develop instructional materials is negligible and not statistically significant ( $r = -0.025$ ,  $p = 0.854$ ), suggesting that variations in mental health do not directly correspond to teachers' confidence or capacity in instructional material development within this

sample.

A significant weak negative correlation exists between stress levels and ability to develop instructional materials ( $r = -0.274$ ,  $p = 0.041$ ). This indicates that higher stress is associated with a lower perceived ability to develop instructional materials, aligning with findings by Chen et al. (2021), who reported that elevated stress can impair teachers' professional efficacy during curriculum transitions.

Although the positive correlation between coping strategies and ability to develop instructional materials ( $r = 0.211$ ) is not statistically significant ( $p = 0.119$ ), it suggests a trend where effective coping may enhance teachers' instructional development capabilities. This observation supports Nguyen et al. (2022), who highlighted coping as a potential mediator that buffers stress effects and supports teaching performance.

These results reveal the complex role of psychological factors influencing teachers' responsiveness to curriculum reforms and highlight the importance of stress management and coping support to maintain instructional effectiveness. These correlational findings reveal that occupational stress—not mental health broadly—is the primary psychological barrier to instructional capacity during MATATAG implementation. While teachers maintain instructional self-efficacy despite moderate mental health challenges, elevated stress significantly erodes their perceived ability to develop quality materials. Effective coping shows promise but cannot fully compensate for elevated contextual demands.

From a 3C Theory perspective, reducing contextual stress through workload management, resource provision, and clear expectations is essential to enabling teachers to deploy their professional competence effectively. Institutional support addressing stress-generating demands, coupled with enhanced coping capacity and preserved mental health, creates optimal conditions for both teacher well-being and instructional effectiveness during curriculum transitions.

Importantly, the finding that stress significantly impairs instructional capacity has direct implications for MATATAG implementation success. The curriculum's ambitious goals—including foundational literacy and numeracy development, 21st-century skills integration, and character education—require teachers to develop thoughtfully designed, carefully aligned instructional materials. Yet if stress levels remain elevated, teachers' capacity to develop such materials is systematically compromised. This creates a critical implementation paradox: the curriculum reform intended to improve educational quality may inadvertently compromise instruction quality if it generates stress levels that undermine teachers' professional performance. Garcia et al. (2020) documented this paradox in their study of curriculum reforms in Southeast Asian contexts, finding that well-intentioned reforms often fail to achieve their goals when implementation stress overwhelms teachers' capacity to respond thoughtfully. Addressing this paradox requires institutional commitment to reducing stress-generating demands through workload management, providing resources that enable teachers to develop materials despite curriculum complexity, and creating time and support structures for material development work

## **5. Discussion**

This chapter presents the discussion of findings derived from the quantitative, descriptive-correlational investigation into the relationship among teachers' mental health, stress, coping mechanisms, and ability to develop instructional materials during the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum.

This study employs the Coping-Competence-Context (3C) Stress Theory as the primary lens for interpreting findings regarding teachers' experiences during MATATAG Curriculum implementation. The 3C theory posits that teacher stress outcomes emerge from dynamic interactions among three

interconnected components: **(1) Coping**—the cognitive and behavioral strategies teachers employ to manage occupational demands; **(2) Competence**—teachers' professional knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy in executing their responsibilities; and **(3) Context**—the organizational, institutional, and environmental factors that shape stress experiences and coping capacity. Rather than viewing stress as a unidirectional phenomenon where demands overwhelm teachers, the 3C framework recognizes stress as an emergent property of interactions among personal coping resources, professional capabilities, and contextual supports. By applying this theory to analyze findings across mental health, occupational stress, coping strategies, instructional self-efficacy, and correlational relationships, this discussion reveals which 3C components represent critical leverage points for institutional intervention and teacher support during curriculum transitions.

### Discussion of Quantitative Results

This research study aimed to examine how teachers' psychological well-being, occupational stress, and adaptive coping strategies influence their professional capacity to develop high-quality instructional materials aligned with the MATATAG Curriculum. Specifically, it aimed to answer the following research questions (1) What is the current state of teachers' mental health during the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum? (2) What is the level of stress experienced by teachers during the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum? (3) What are the coping strategies most commonly used by teachers to manage stress during the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum? (4) What is the perceived level of ability among teachers to develop instructional materials aligned with the MATATAG Curriculum? (5) What is the correlations among teachers' mental health, stress levels, coping mechanisms, and their ability to develop instructional materials during the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum?

This study was conducted during the implementation phase of the MATATAG Curriculum. The respondents were composed of fifty-six (56) teachers representing varied career stages and experience levels. The researcher administered a multi-dimensional survey assessing mental health, occupational stress, coping strategies, and instructional material development competence. Data were analyzed and interpreted using descriptive and inferential statistical tools, including means, standard deviations, and Spearman correlation coefficients.

## 6. Conclusion

Teachers experience moderate levels of psychological well-being during MATATAG implementation, marked by a balance between protective factors and areas of concern. Teachers demonstrate solid capacity for concentration, sense of usefulness, decision-making ability, and enjoyment of daily activities, reflecting resilience amid reform demands. However, moderate distress is evident through reports of sleep disruption, persistent strain, difficulty overcoming obstacles, and some unhappiness or depression. The overall mental health mean of 2.62 indicates that most teachers maintain psychological equilibrium, though substantial individual variability reveals that some experience significant challenges. The conclusion is that while teachers' mental health is not in crisis, it requires ongoing institutional attention and support to prevent moderate distress from escalating into more severe difficulties that could compromise well-being and professional effectiveness.

Teachers experience moderate occupational stress during MATATAG implementation, occurring "sometimes to fairly often." Stress stems from curriculum uncertainty, unexpected demands, and perceived loss of control. However, teachers maintain confidence in handling problems and perceive favorable circum-

stances, suggesting retained agency and optimism. The moderate standard deviations reveal heterogeneity in stress experience, with some teachers facing more significant strain than others. The conclusion is that occupational stress during MATATAG implementation is real and consequential, yet manageable for most teachers. This moderate stress warrants institutional support through workload management and stress reduction initiatives to prevent escalation that could compromise well-being and performance.

Teachers predominantly employ adaptive coping strategies, demonstrating agency and functional capacity. Spiritual and religious coping emerged strongest, reflecting the significant protective role of faith-based approaches in the Filipino teaching context. Problem-focused coping through action and planning, acceptance-based coping, and social support-seeking were also frequently utilized. Maladaptive strategies—denial, substance use, self-blame, and giving up—were used infrequently, which is psychologically protective. The conclusion is that teachers possess and actively deploy adaptive coping resources supporting resilience during curriculum implementation. While the predominance of healthy coping is encouraging, the non-significant relationship between overall coping and instructional ability suggests that adaptive coping protects well-being but may not fully compensate for elevated stress in maintaining professional performance. Strengthening coping capacity and reducing structural stress could enhance both well-being and instructional effectiveness.

Teachers perceive themselves as competent in developing MATATAG-aligned materials, with an overall mean of 3.26 indicating strong professional self-efficacy. Teachers reported high confidence in reflecting on material effectiveness, integrating curriculum competencies, and using digital tools. They also reported adequate resources, institutional support, and collaborative opportunities. The conclusion is that the professional foundation for successful MATATAG implementation exists within the teaching workforce. Teachers possess strong instructional self-efficacy and engage in reflective, collaborative practice. However, the significant negative correlation between stress and instructional ability reveals that this strong foundation is vulnerable to erosion under sustained occupational strain, underscoring stress management's importance in maintaining instructional effectiveness.

The correlational analysis revealed that the relationship between mental health status and instructional ability is negligible and non-significant ( $r = -0.025$ ,  $p = 0.854$ ), suggesting occupational role identity buffers professional function despite moderate distress. However, the significant weak negative correlation between stress and instructional ability ( $r = -0.274$ ,  $p = 0.041$ ) is consequential: higher stress is associated with lower perceived instructional capacity. The positive but non-significant correlation between coping and instructional ability ( $r = 0.211$ ,  $p = 0.119$ ) suggests adaptive coping may enhance capacity, though the relationship did not reach statistical significance. The conclusion is that occupational stress—not mental health broadly—is the primary psychological barrier to instructional capacity during MATATAG implementation. This reframes stress management from a peripheral well-being issue to a core professional priority. While teachers maintain instructional effectiveness despite moderate mental health challenges, elevated stress erodes this resilience. Adaptive coping shows promise but may not fully compensate for elevated stress. Institutional efforts to reduce stress, coupled with support for effective coping, are essential to maintaining both teacher well-being and instructional quality during curriculum transitions.

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