

A SURVEY ON CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND TEACHING PRACTICES OF PRE- SERVICE TEACHERS' STRESS LEVEL

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of stress on the classroom management and teaching practices of pre-service teachers during their practicum. Teaching is an inherently emotional profession, and the ability of teachers to manage stress is crucial for effective classroom engagement and instructional quality. The research aimed to (i) examine pre-service teachers' perceptions of their classroom management abilities, (ii) explore how stress affects their interactions with students, and (iii) identify coping strategies that enhance teaching effectiveness and overall performance. A quantitative survey design was employed using a structured questionnaire distributed to pre-service teachers from Institut Pendidikan Guru Malaysia, Kampus Tuanku Bainun. A quantitative research design was employed using a structured questionnaire distributed to 111 respondents. The instrument, adapted from the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale and the Maslach Burnout Inventory, measured aspects of classroom management, stress, and coping strategies. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics through SPSS to determine the relationships among variables. Findings revealed that pre-service teachers perceived themselves as competent in classroom management, particularly in fostering creativity and maintaining routines, though challenges remained in dealing with problematic students. Stress was found to reduce empathy and emotional availability while not significantly impairing communication or participation. Respondents actively adopted personal coping strategies such as reflection, self-care, and peer support but perceived limited institutional assistance for mental health. In conclusion, stress significantly influences pre-service teachers' emotional engagement and teaching performance. Strengthening both individual coping mechanisms and institutional support systems is essential to enhance pre-service teachers' resilience, classroom effectiveness, and professional well-being.

Keyword: pre-service teachers, stress management, classroom management, teaching practices, coping strategies

Abstrak

Kajian ini meneliti kesan tekanan terhadap pengurusan bilik darjah dan amalan pengajaran guru pra-perkhidmatan semasa praktikum. Profesion perguruan secara semula jadi melibatkan emosi, dan keupayaan guru untuk mengurus tekanan adalah penting bagi memastikan penglibatan murid yang berkesan serta kualiti pengajaran yang tinggi. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk (1) meneliti persepsi guru pra-perkhidmatan terhadap kebolehan mereka dalam pengurusan bilik darjah, (2) meneroka bagaimana tekanan mempengaruhi interaksi mereka dengan murid, dan (3) mengenal pasti strategi daya tindak yang dapat meningkatkan keberkesanan dan prestasi pengajaran secara keseluruhan. Reka bentuk kajian bersifat kuantitatif digunakan dengan soal selidik berstruktur diedarkan kepada guru pra-perkhidmatan di Institut Pendidikan Guru Malaysia, Kampus Tuanku Bainun. Instrumen kajian ini diadaptasi daripada skala yang telah diiktiraf seperti Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale dan Maslach Burnout Inventory, yang mengukur aspek pengurusan bilik darjah, kesan tekanan, dan strategi daya tindak. Reka bentuk penyelidikan kuantitatif telah digunakan dengan menggunakan soal selidik berstruktur yang diedarkan kepada 111 orang responden. Instrumen kajian ini diadaptasi daripada Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale dan Maslach Burnout Inventory, yang mengukur aspek pengurusan bilik darjah, tekanan, dan strategi daya tindak. Data dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif melalui perisian SPSS bagi menentukan hubungan antara pemboleh ubah. Dapatan menunjukkan bahawa guru pra-perkhidmatan menganggap diri mereka kompeten dalam mengurus bilik darjah, khususnya dalam memupuk kreativiti dan mengekalkan rutin, walaupun mereka menghadapi cabaran dalam menangani murid yang bermasalah. Tekanan didapati mengurangkan empati dan keupayaan emosi, namun tidak menjejaskan komunikasi atau penglibatan secara signifikan. Responden turut mengamalkan strategi daya tindak peribadi seperti refleksi, penjagaan sendiri, dan sokongan rakan sebaya, tetapi merasakan bantuan institusi terhadap kesihatan mental masih terhad. Kesimpulannya, tekanan memberi kesan yang ketara terhadap penglibatan emosi dan prestasi pengajaran guru pra-perkhidmatan. Pengukuhan mekanisme daya tindak individu serta sistem sokongan institusi amat penting bagi meningkatkan ketahanan, keberkesanan pengajaran, dan kesejahteraan profesional guru pra-perkhidmatan.

Kata kunci: Guru pra-perkhidmatan, pengurusan tekanan, pengurusan bilik darjah, amalan pengajaran, strategi daya tindak

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is widely recognised as an emotionally and cognitively demanding profession that requires teachers to manage instructional delivery, regulate emotions and sustain interpersonal relationships simultaneously. Classrooms function not only as academic spaces but also as emotional and social settings where students' behaviours, needs and responses interact continuously with teachers' judgments and actions. Scholars argue that teaching is inherently emotional because teachers must navigate student behaviour, instructional challenges and institutional expectations on a daily basis. Dewaele et al. (2018) emphasised that the emotional climate of the classroom is shaped by both teachers and students, capturing Aristotle's belief that educating the mind cannot be separated from educating the heart. As emotions influence decision-making, patience, motivation and interactions, teachers' emotional competence becomes central to their overall instructional effectiveness.

Practicum is one of the most critical phases of teacher preparation for pre-service teachers because it exposes them to the complexities of a real classroom for the first time. During this period, they must demonstrate their ability to plan lessons, manage behaviour, engage students and communicate effectively, all while being observed and evaluated by supervisors and mentor teachers. These layered expectations can trigger stress, emotional exhaustion and heightened self-doubt. Emotional strain is strongly linked to teaching performance because overwhelmed teachers may find it difficult to maintain order, respond empathetically, adapt to unexpected behaviour or sustain student engagement. Schonert-Reichl (2017, as cited in Wang, 2023) emphasised that teachers who possess strong emotional competence display more effective instructional behaviours and nurture positive learning environments, highlighting the role of emotional self-regulation in supporting pedagogical quality.

Although emotional regulation and stress management are increasingly recognised in teacher education literature, relatively limited research has explored how stress specifically affects pre-service teachers' classroom management and their observable teaching behaviours during practicum. Jōgi et al. (2022) argued that there is a need for more studies that connect emotional strain directly to classroom practices. Pre-service teachers frequently manage disruptive behaviour, negotiate diverse learning needs and attempt to build rapport with students while coping with psychological pressure. High levels of stress can impair their decision-making, reduce patience and disrupt routine classroom maintenance. Chronic stress may weaken their instructional consistency and effectiveness, echoing Dewaele et al.'s (2018) view that heightened emotional strain undermines overall teaching quality. Motivated by these concerns, the present study examines how stress influences pre-service teachers' classroom management abilities, their interactions with students and the coping strategies they

employ during practicum. The study aims to contribute to teacher education by highlighting emotional dimensions that are often overshadowed by pedagogical and content-focused requirements.

This study seeks to examine how psychological factors, particularly stress, shape the teaching practices of pre-service teachers during their practicum. It focuses on exploring pre-service teachers' perceptions of their classroom management abilities, understanding how stress affects their interactions with students and identifying the strategies they use to cope with emotional strain in order to improve their teaching effectiveness and overall performance. Accordingly, the study is guided by three research questions: how pre-service teachers perceive their classroom management abilities during practicum, how stress influences their interactions with students, and what stress-management strategies they find helpful in enhancing their teaching performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on stress in teaching has expanded significantly in recent years due to growing awareness of the psychological pressures teachers encounter throughout their careers. Stress, according to Chrousos (2009), arises when individuals perceive a threat to their internal balance, prompting both physiological and behavioural responses. Teaching is a profession in which stress is particularly prevalent because teachers must handle unpredictable student behaviours, meet academic expectations, fulfil administrative tasks and maintain positive interpersonal relationships. These stressors are often amplified during practicum because they are confronted with complex school environments while still developing confidence and competence. The convergence of expectations from supervisors, mentor teachers and students intensifies psychological pressure and may hinder performance.

Classroom management has consistently been identified as one of the most significant sources of stress for novice teachers. Bardach et al. (2023) noted that beginning teachers frequently struggle to balance behaviour control with instructional demands. Studies by Dwiniasih et al. (2020) found that pre-service teachers often feel insufficiently prepared to handle disruptive behaviour, resulting in anxiety and reduced confidence. Research by Ngui and Lay (2020) and Karasova and Nehyba (2025) further suggests that teachers experiencing high stress demonstrate weaker classroom presence and may hesitate to enforce rules, which leads to less effective behavioural strategies and a decrease in instructional control.

Stress also influences the quality of teacher–student interactions, which are essential in supporting student learning, engagement and emotional security. Charisma and Nurmalasari (2020) reported that stress reduces teachers' emotional availability and patience, often leading to strained

relationships with students. Zito et al. (2024) observed that teachers under stress may behave rigidly or even withdraw emotionally, especially when overwhelmed by challenging classroom situations. Glock and Kleen (2019) highlighted that these changes in behaviour can weaken rapport, discourage student participation and negatively affect classroom climate. Emotional strain thus restricts teachers' capacity to connect, empathise and respond sensitively to students' needs.

Teaching practices are similarly affected by stress. Lu (2025) reported that pre-service teachers experiencing elevated stress may abandon thorough lesson preparation or rely on teacher-centred methods due to fear of losing control of the classroom. Alanazi (2019) and Cavanagh et al. (2019) found that stress reduces teachers' ability to differentiate lessons, adapt instructional strategies and manage diverse learning needs. König et al. (2019) added that stress often leads teachers to adhere to rigid lesson structures rather than using flexible and responsive approaches that can support student learning more effectively.

The way teachers cope with stress is essential in determining whether stress will hinder or support their professional growth. Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping emphasises that individuals respond to stress based on their appraisal of the situation and the coping resources available to them. Adaptive coping strategies, such as mindfulness, reflection and social support, can reduce anxiety and enhance performance. Mansfield et al. (2020) found that such strategies help teachers maintain emotional balance and improve instructional quality. Carroll et al. (2022) identified reflective journaling and self-care practices as particularly beneficial for pre-service teachers, allowing them to process emotional challenges and develop stronger resilience. Nguyen et al. (2024) highlighted that institutional support in the form of mentoring, counselling and structured guidance enhances emotional preparedness and fosters healthier teaching experiences.

Overall, the literature underscores the need for teacher education programmes to address emotional preparedness and psychological resilience alongside pedagogical skills. By synthesising existing research with the present study, this investigation contributes to a deeper understanding of how stress shapes pre-service teachers' classroom management and teaching practices during practicum.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative survey design to examine the influence of stress on pre-service teachers' classroom management abilities and teaching practices. A structured questionnaire was distributed to 111 pre-service teachers enrolled in the PISMP programme at Institut Pendidikan Guru Malaysia, Kampus Tuanku Bainun. Purposive sampling was used to

ensure that respondents had completed their practicum and possessed relevant firsthand experience needed to address the research objectives.

The questionnaire consisted of four sections. The first section collected demographic information. The second section measured classroom management abilities using adapted items from the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale developed by Tschannen- Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001). The third section explored the influence of stress on teacher–student interactions using items adapted from the Maslach Burnout Inventory by Maslach, Jackson and Schwab (1997) as well as instruments used by Poulou (2007) and Ghanizadeh and Jahedizadeh (2017). The fourth section assessed coping strategies based on items adapted from Freeman and Coll (2009) and related studies on teacher well-being. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Expert validation was conducted to ensure suitability, clarity and alignment of questionnaire items with the research objectives. A pilot study involving thirty respondents was carried out, and Cronbach's Alpha values indicated strong internal consistency. The reliability coefficients were 0.873 for classroom management items, 0.757 for stress and teacher–student interaction items and 0.839 for coping strategies, confirming the instrument's reliability.

Data collection was conducted using Google Forms. Ethical principles were followed, and respondents were informed of the study's purpose. Confidentiality was assured, and participation was voluntary. Descriptive statistics including mean scores and standard deviations were generated using SPSS to analyse each construct.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings revealed a comprehensive picture of how pre-service teachers perceive their classroom management abilities, how stress influences their interactions with students and how they employ coping strategies during practicum. Overall, respondents demonstrated high confidence in their classroom management skills, with a mean score of 4.01. They felt capable of establishing rules, maintaining routines, assessing understanding and designing creative lessons, suggesting that teacher preparation had provided them with strong foundational skills. Their highest level of confidence was associated with fostering student creativity, indicating that they believed they could inspire imaginative thinking and develop engaging learning activities. This aligns with Jennings and Greenberg's (2019) view that strong instructional foundations promote positive learning climates and effective classroom management.

However, the lowest score was related to the ability to reach the most difficult students, which received a mean score of 3.63. This indicates that pre-

service teachers struggled more when working with students who displayed behavioural difficulties or low motivation. Kyriacou (2022) similarly noted that challenging behaviour is one of the most significant stressors for novice teachers. According to the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), such situations may be perceived as high-threat and low-control events, resulting in reduced confidence. This highlights an area where teacher training programmes may need to provide more targeted behavioural management and emotional regulation strategies.

The findings also showed that stress influenced teacher–student interactions, with an overall mean score of 3.77. Respondents reported that students generally remained engaged during lessons even when teachers were stressed, suggesting that pre-service teachers could maintain procedural aspects of teaching. Many respondents indicated they were able to communicate clearly despite stress, aligning with Florence et al. (2022) argument that communication skills often stabilise instructional performance under pressure. These results indicate that emotional strain did not significantly hinder basic teaching tasks such as giving instructions or sustaining participation.

Nonetheless, emotional aspects of teaching were more vulnerable to stress. Many respondents reported feeling emotionally drained after interacting with students, revealing that stress had a notable impact on their emotional energy. This emotional exhaustion reflects key features of burnout identified in the literature. The most concerning finding was the difficulty respondents faced in showing empathy under stressful conditions. With a mean score of 3.41, empathy declined significantly as stress increased. This finding aligns with Jennings and Greenberg (2019), who observed that stress weakens teachers' ability to respond with warmth and understanding, potentially compromising teacher–student relationships and engagement.

Coping strategies played a meaningful role in moderating the effects of stress. Respondents demonstrated active use of coping methods, with an overall mean of 3.82. They strongly agreed that effective stress management benefits student learning, showing awareness of the link between teacher well-being and classroom performance. Reflection emerged as a widely used strategy, as respondents frequently evaluated their emotional responses after teaching experiences. Wang et al. (2025) noted that reflection enhances emotional regulation and professional growth, supporting the development of self-awareness among pre-service teachers. Respondents also valued self-care practices, acknowledging that leisure activities, rest and physical well-being supported their emotional resilience, which is consistent with findings by Florence et al. (2022).

Peer and mentor support were additional coping resources frequently used by respondents. According to Kyriacou (2022), social support reduces

feelings of professional isolation and enhances emotional resilience. However, respondents identified limited institutional support for mental health, with the lowest mean score of 3.43. This suggests that teacher education programmes may not be offering sufficient counselling services, emotional support or structured stress-management resources. Richards et al. (2022) similarly argued that institutions often overlook the emotional strain experienced by trainee teachers, highlighting the need for more comprehensive support systems. Overall, the integrated interpretation of findings shows that pre-service teachers possess strong instructional capabilities but experience emotional vulnerability in stressful situations, particularly in their ability to maintain empathy and build relationships with challenging students.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined pre-service teachers' classroom management abilities, stress experiences and coping strategies during practicum. The findings revealed that respondents demonstrated high confidence in fundamental classroom management skills, particularly in establishing routines, enforcing rules and fostering creativity. However, they found it more challenging to manage students exhibiting disruptive behaviour or emotional difficulties. Stress influenced their emotional engagement more than their instructional or communication performance. While pre-service teachers could maintain clear communication and sustain student participation during stressful moments, they experienced emotional exhaustion and reduced empathy, which weakened relational aspects of teaching.

The study highlights several important implications. Teacher education programmes should integrate more structured training on emotional regulation, stress management and behavioural intervention strategies. Workshops on mindfulness, self-awareness and coping techniques may help pre-service teachers develop the resilience needed for classroom challenges. Institutions should also enhance mental health support by offering accessible counselling services and fostering mentoring relationships that emphasise emotional well-being. Schools hosting practicum placements should ensure that mentor teachers provide consistent guidance and emotional encouragement. Finally, pre-service teachers should continue to cultivate reflective habits and prioritise self-care to maintain psychological balance and strengthen resilience.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, stress is an unavoidable component of teaching, particularly during practicum when expectations are high and experience is limited. Although pre-service teachers demonstrated strong classroom management abilities, they experienced emotional strain in challenging situations, particularly in maintaining empathy. Effective coping strategies

can mitigate the negative effects of stress, but institutional support remains vital. Addressing the emotional and psychological needs of pre-service teachers is essential for developing teachers who are not only pedagogically competent but also emotionally resilient and capable of fostering positive, supportive and engaging classroom environments.

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PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON USING SONGS FOR VOCABULARY ACQUISITION IN PRIMARY ESL CLASSROOMS

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Abstract

This study investigated pre-service teachers' perceptions of using songs for vocabulary acquisition in primary ESL classrooms. Vocabulary development is essential for young learners' language proficiency, and songs are recognised as an interactive medium that enhances motivation, engagement, and memory retention. The objectives of this study were to explore pre-service teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of songs, identify factors contributing to their reluctance to use songs, and examine the criteria they consider when selecting songs for vocabulary teaching. A mixed-method research design was adopted. Quantitative data were collected from 112 pre-service TESL undergraduates through a closed-ended questionnaire using convenience sampling. Subsequently, five participants were purposively selected for semi-structured interviews to gain deeper insights into their experiences. Findings indicated strong positive perceptions regarding the effectiveness of songs in enhancing vocabulary learning. However, reluctance was influenced by limited formal training, insufficient confidence in integrating songs into lesson planning and assessment, and pressure to prioritise exam-focused instruction. Participants also emphasized clear lyrics, syllabus relevance, age appropriateness, and suitability for Total Physical Response (TPR) as key criteria for song selection. The study highlights the need for enhanced pedagogical support and training to encourage effective song-based teaching practices in primary ESL classrooms.

Keywords: songs, vocabulary acquisition, pre-service teachers, ESL, primary education

Abstrak

Kajian ini meneliti persepsi guru pelatih terhadap penggunaan lagu sebagai alat pemerolehan kosa kata dalam bilik darjah ESL sekolah rendah. Pemerolehan kosakata merupakan asas kepada penguasaan bahasa bagi murid, dan penggunaan lagu dikenal pasti sebagai pendekatan interaktif yang dapat meningkatkan motivasi, penglibatan, serta keupayaan mengingat. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk meneroka persepsi guru pelatih terhadap keberkesanan lagu, mengenal pasti faktor