

Early Childhood Behavioral Challenges: Kindergarten Teachers' Insights on Counseling Techniques

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Abstract: This phenomenological study examined the lived experiences of kindergarten teachers regarding challenges, coping mechanisms, and educational insights in managing early childhood behavior. Using purposive sampling, ten kindergarten teachers from public elementary schools within Dujali District, Davao del Norte participants were selected and data were collected through in-depth interviews (IDI) and focus group discussions (FGD). Thematic analysis revealed three primary challenges faced by teachers: lack of training in child-focused counseling techniques, emotional burnout and stress, and insufficient institutional support. To cope with these challenges, teachers employed classroom management strategies, implemented proactive behavioral interventions, and demonstrated an understanding of learners' diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, participants provided educational insights highlighting the need to improve communication systems among educators and administrators, integrate data-driven behavior monitoring tools, and adopt a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) to address varying student needs effectively. The study underscored the critical importance of comprehensive, evidence-based professional development, institutional reinforcement, and collaborative frameworks to empower teachers and promote positive behavioral outcomes in early childhood settings.

Keywords: Early Childhood Behavioral Challenges, Kindergarten Teachers', Insights, Counseling Techniques.

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I. INTRODUCTION

➤ Background of the Study

Kindergarten is a critical stage in a child's social, emotional, and behavioral development. However, managing diverse classroom behaviors remains a challenge for many teachers, as some children struggle with emotional regulation and positive peer interactions. These issues affect both learning and the classroom environment. This study was conducted to explore how kindergarten teachers use counseling techniques and practical behavior management strategies in addressing these concerns. By documenting effective classroom practices, the research seeks to identify approaches that promote positive behavior and respond to the increasing need for effective behavior management and mental health support in early childhood education.

The findings of this study are expected to benefit teachers, school counselors, parents, and policymakers by providing a better understanding of strategies that support children's emotional and social development. Strengthening teacher-student relationships and improving classroom management can contribute to a more positive learning environment while promoting the holistic development of young learners.

Globally, early childhood educators continue to encounter challenges in managing children's behavior due to limited training, inadequate resources, and insufficient institutional support. In the United States, many teachers feel unprepared to address behavioral concerns because of limited professional development in socio-emotional learning and behavior management, particularly in disadvantaged communities (Jones et al., 2020). Schools also face shortages of specialized support services (McClelland et al., 2021), while inadequate leadership and professional support further hinder teachers' ability to respond effectively to children's emotional and developmental needs (Kaiser & Rasminsky, 2020). Although Finland emphasizes social-emotional learning and play-based education to reduce behavioral issues (Sahlberg, 2021), challenges remain in supporting children from multicultural backgrounds (Kirby et al., 2022). Likewise, teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa struggle with behavioral concerns linked to poverty, trauma, and conflict, compounded by limited psychological support and resources (Bhana et al., 2021).

In the Philippines, behavioral management is constrained by large class sizes, limited professional development, and socioeconomic factors that contribute to children's emotional and behavioral difficulties (Bautista &

De Guzman, 2020; Reyes et al., 2023). Studies have also identified the lack of structured guidance and counseling services in kindergarten, leaving teachers with insufficient preparation to address learners' emotional and social needs (Feliciano, 2020). Similarly, teachers in Ilocos Sur experience difficulties in managing disruptive behaviors because of inadequate training, reliance on instinctive rather than evidence-based strategies, and limited access to mental health professionals (Tabura, 2025). Public schools, particularly in rural areas such as Davao, also face shortages of child psychologists and guidance counselors, forcing teachers to assume counseling roles without sufficient expertise (Gatchalian, 2021).

At the local level, teachers in Davao City continue to face challenges in implementing effective behavior management due to the absence of structured counseling techniques and institutional support (Rocaberte, 2024). Likewise, kindergarten teachers in Dujali, Davao del Norte, have limited opportunities for professional development in child psychology and counseling, making it difficult to address behavioral concerns effectively (Villaflor & Gomez, 2023). Given these persistent gaps, this study seeks to identify practical counseling approaches that promote positive behavior, emotional regulation, and healthy social interactions while strengthening teacher-student relationships and creating a more supportive learning environment.

➤ Research Questions

In line with the purpose of exploring the strategies of teachers in addressing childhood behavioral challenges of kindergarten including the coping mechanisms with the challenges that they encountered, this study specifically sought answers to the following research questions:

- What are the challenges of teachers on their counselling techniques in early childhood behavior of kindergarten learners?
- How do Kindergarten teachers cope with the challenges encountered in counselling techniques of early childhood behavior?
- What educational management insights can be drawn on counselling techniques in early childhood behavior of kindergarten learners?

➤ Theoretical Lens

This study is anchored on Behavioral Theory (Operant Conditioning) by B.F. Skinner (1953), which explains that behavior is shaped by its consequences. According to the theory, reinforcement increases the likelihood of desired behaviors, while punishment reduces undesirable ones. It is further supported by Beck's Cognitive Behavioral Theory (CBT), which emphasizes that thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are interconnected. CBT suggests that changing negative thought patterns through cognitive restructuring, self-monitoring, coping strategies, behavioral activation, and exposure techniques can lead to positive behavioral changes.

The study is also grounded in Rogers' Humanistic Therapy Theory (1961), which highlights personal growth, self-actualization, and the importance of a supportive and empathetic learning environment. This theory promotes active listening, unconditional positive regard, and a learner-centered approach that encourages children to express themselves, explore solutions, and develop positive behaviors through trust, acceptance, and meaningful teacher support.

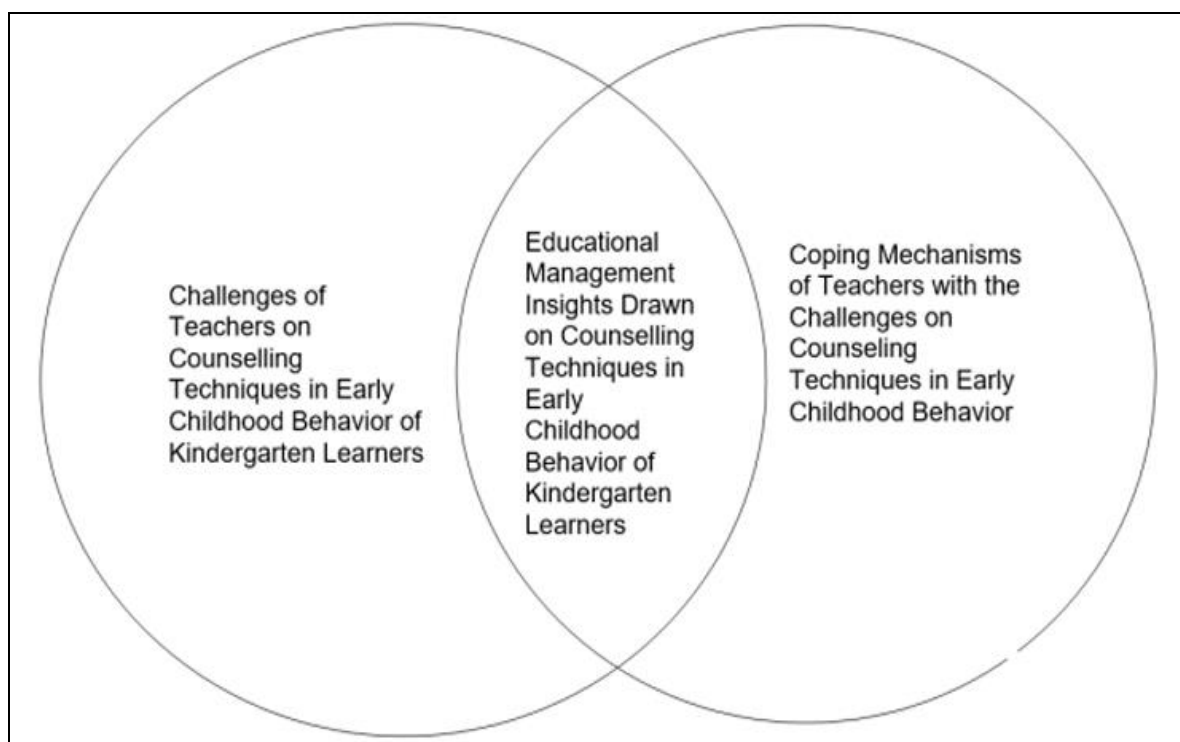


Fig 1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

II. METHOD

➤ *Design and Procedure*

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of kindergarten teachers in applying counseling techniques to address early childhood behavioral challenges. Guided by Lester's (1999, as cited in Bhandari, 2020) concept of phenomenology, the study focused on understanding teachers' personal perspectives and experiences while setting aside preconceived assumptions. Consistent with Qutoshi (2020), data collection and analysis were conducted simultaneously using in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and open-ended questionnaires, allowing themes to emerge naturally from participants' narratives. Supported by Delve and Limpacher (2022), these methods provided rich and comprehensive data that captured teachers' challenges, coping strategies, and behavior management practices, with thematic analysis used to identify meaningful patterns and present an authentic account of their experiences.

➤ *Research Participants*

The study involved ten (10) purposively selected kindergarten teachers from public elementary schools in Dujali District, Davao del Norte. Participants were permanent teachers (Teacher I–III) with at least three years of kindergarten teaching experience and consistent Very Satisfactory performance ratings for the past three school years. Six teachers participated in in-depth interviews (IDIs), while four joined a focus group discussion (FGD) to share their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies in applying counseling techniques to address early childhood behavioral concerns. Purposive sampling ensured that participants possessed relevant knowledge and experience, allowing the study to gather rich, meaningful insights into effective counseling practices and behavior management in kindergarten classrooms.

➤ *Research Instrument*

This study employed multiple qualitative data collection methods to explore kindergarten teachers' experiences in using counseling techniques to manage early childhood behavior. Data were gathered through audio-recorded unstructured in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and observational field notes over four days, with each session lasting approximately one hour and fifteen minutes. An interview guide with open-ended questions encouraged participants to share their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies in addressing behavioral concerns. Consistent with Fuster-Guillén (2019), in-depth interviews provided rich insights into teachers' personal perspectives, while FGDs, involving four participants alongside six interviewees, fostered collaborative discussions and a deeper understanding of shared experiences, as supported by Stewart and Shamdasani (2019) and Krueger and Casey (2020). Together, these methods generated comprehensive data on counseling practices and behavior management in kindergarten classrooms.

➤ *Data Analysis*

This study employed thematic analysis to examine qualitative data gathered from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with kindergarten teachers. Guided by Creswell's (2012, as cited in Chali, Eshete, and Debelo, 2022), the analysis involved familiarizing with the data, coding meaningful responses, identifying recurring patterns, reviewing and refining themes, and defining themes that addressed the research questions. The final interpretation was presented through a narrative supported by participants' direct quotations and related to existing literature, providing insights into teachers' experiences, challenges, and coping strategies in applying counseling techniques to manage early childhood behavioral concerns.

The study also adopted framework analysis to systematically organize and interpret the data, following the procedures of Fuchs (2023) and Goldsmith (2021). Verbatim transcripts were organized, coded, and grouped into categories that led to broader themes reflecting teachers' counseling practices and resilience in addressing behavioral challenges. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing were conducted. Results were presented through narratives, tables, charts, and thematic diagrams to clearly communicate the findings and provide practical implications for early childhood education. As emphasized by Ritchie and Spencer (1994, as cited in Goldsmith, 2021), framework analysis offers a structured and flexible approach for generating meaningful and policy-relevant insights.

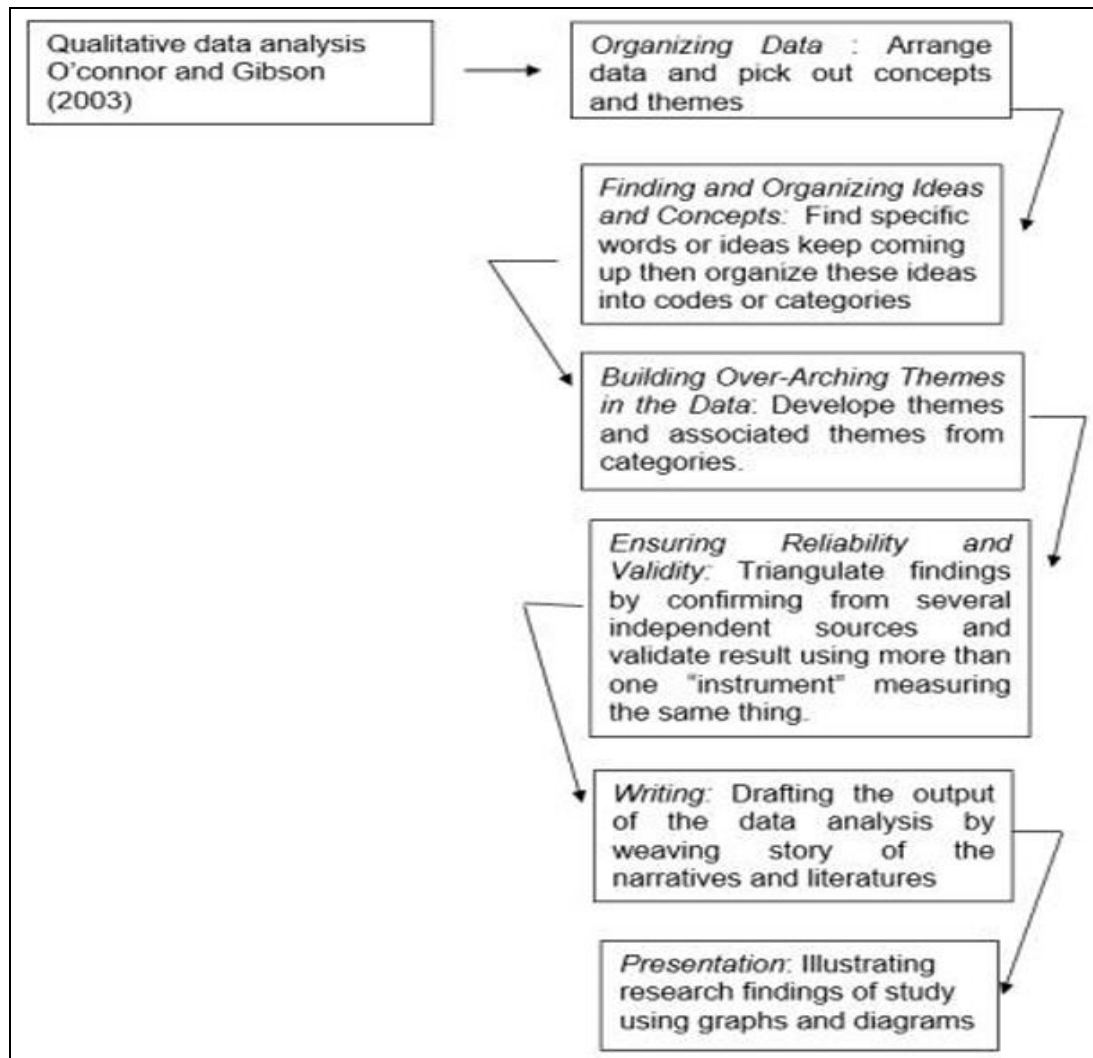


Fig 2 Analytical Framework of the Study

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Challenges of Teachers on Counseling Techniques in Early Childhood Behavior of Kindergarten Learners

➤ Lack of Training in Child-Focused Counseling

Kindergarten teachers frequently encounter behavioral challenges that require appropriate counseling skills and specialized support. However, one of the major barriers to effective behavior management is the lack of training in child-focused counseling techniques. Without sufficient preparation, many teachers struggle to confidently address the emotional and behavioral needs of young learners in the classroom.

This finding is consistent with Martinez and Robles (2021), who reported that pre-service teacher education provides limited training in counseling strategies tailored to early childhood, with behavior management courses often lacking emphasis on developmental psychology and behavior regulation. Likewise, Santos et al. (2022) found that although teachers are expected to guide learners' emotional and behavioral development, they are not provided with adequate professional training, resulting in uncertainty and reduced

confidence in managing behavioral concerns. The participants' responses further reflected this lack of training in child-focused counseling.

“Ang mga early childhood behavior ng aking mga learners, lalo na ang madalas na emotional outbursts tulad ng tantrums at pag-iyak, ay malaki ang epekto sa aking counseling techniques; madalas akong nakakaramdam ng kawalan ng kaalaman kung paano sila pakalmahin nang epektibo. Sa totoo lang, ang masasabi ko sa aking counseling techniques ay karaniwan itong nakabatay lang sa trial and error o sa mga simpleng pampakalma, dahil sa kakulangan ko sa pormal na pagsasanay sa child-focused counseling. Kapag ini-employ ko ang aking counseling techniques, madalas ay ginagamit ko lang ang pag-distract, pagbibigay ng 'time-out,' o pag-alok ng comfort object, na hindi laging tumatalab sa ugat ng problema.” (“My learners' early childhood behaviors, especially frequent emotional outbursts like tantrums and crying, significantly affect my counseling techniques; I often feel a lack of knowledge on how to effectively calm them. Honestly, what I can say about my counseling techniques is that they are usually based on trial and error or simple calming methods, due to my lack of formal training in child-focused counseling. When I employ my counseling techniques,

I often just use distraction, giving 'time-outs,' or offering a comfort object, which doesn't always address the root cause of the problem.") (P1)

"Ang pag-uugali ng aking mga learners, tulad ng pagiging withdrawn o agresibo, ay nakakaapekto sa aking counseling techniques sa paraang nahihirapan akong alamin ang underlying causes ng kanilang behavior dahil sa kakulangan sa training sa child psychology. Ang masasabi ko sa aking counseling techniques ay limitado ito sa mga immediate surface-level responses, imbes na pagtukoy sa pangangailangan ng bata. Kapag ini-employ ko ang aking counseling techniques, sinusubukan kong magtanong pero madalas ay hindi ko alam ang tamang paraan para mag-probe nang hindi sila tinatakot, kaya ang focus ko lang ay sa pagpapatigil ng disruptive behavior." (*"My learners' behaviors, such as being withdrawn or aggressive, affect my counseling techniques in a way that I struggle to identify the underlying causes of their behavior due to a lack of training in child psychology. What I can say about my counseling techniques is that they are limited to immediate surface-level responses, rather than identifying the child's needs. When I employ my counseling techniques, I try to ask questions but often don't know the right way to probe without scaring them, so my focus is just on stopping the disruptive behavior."*) (P2)

Based on the participants' narratives, P1 struggled to manage learners' emotional outbursts, such as tantrums and crying, often relying on trial-and-error strategies, distraction, time-outs, or comfort objects because of limited training in child-focused counseling. Likewise, P2 found it difficult to address withdrawn or aggressive behaviors, as the lack of knowledge in child psychology limited their ability to identify the underlying causes. As a result, both participants focused mainly on controlling disruptive behaviors rather than addressing children's emotional needs through appropriate counseling techniques.

These findings support the studies of Lee and Tan (2020), who reported that many early childhood educators lack the foundational training needed to apply evidence-based counseling and socio-emotional learning strategies. Similarly, Nguyen (2021) emphasized that the absence of culturally responsive counseling in teacher development programs further limits teachers' ability to effectively support children from diverse backgrounds. Other participants also expressed similar experiences, as reflected in the following responses.

"Ang early childhood behavior ng aking mga learners, tulad ng pagiging makulit o hindi pagsunod sa instructions, ay nakakaapekto sa aking counseling techniques sa paraang mas nagiging relyado ako sa simpleng verbal instructions at positive reinforcement. Ang masasabi ko sa aking counseling techniques ay medyo basic lang ito, dahil ang aking pag-unawa sa child-focused counseling ay nagmumula lang sa karanasan at hindi sa structured training. Kapag ini-employ ko ang aking counseling techniques, madalas akong gumagamit ng sticker charts, praise, at pagpapaalala sa rules, umaasa na magbabago ang kanilang pag-uugali sa pamamagitan ng patuloy na paghikayat." (*"My learners' early childhood behaviors, such as being mischievous or not following*

instructions, affect my counseling techniques in a way that I become more reliant on simple verbal instructions and positive reinforcement. What I can say about my counseling techniques is that they are quite basic, as my understanding of child-focused counseling comes only from experience and not from structured training. When I employ my counseling techniques, I often use sticker charts, praise, and reminders of rules, hoping their behavior will change through continuous encouragement.") (P6)

"Ang pag-uugali ng aking mga learners, lalo na ang mga may persistent behavioral issues, ay nakakaapekto sa aking counseling techniques dahil nahihirapan akong magbuo ng matibay na rapport sa kanila; minsan, parang tinatanggihan nila ang aking paglapit. Ang masasabi ko sa aking counseling techniques ay kulang ako sa specialized tools para sa mga ganitong sitwasyon, dahil sa kakulangan ko ng training sa advanced child-focused counseling strategies. Kapag ini-employ ko ang aking counseling techniques, sinusubukan kong maging mas approachable at consistent, pero madalas ay pakiramdam ko ay kulang pa rin ang aking kakayahan upang tuluyan silang pagtiwalaan at buksan ang kanilang kalooban sa akin." (*"My learners' behaviors, especially those with persistent behavioral issues, affect my counseling techniques because I struggle to build strong rapport with them; sometimes, they seem to reject my approach. What I can say about my counseling techniques is that I lack specialized tools for such situations, due to my lack of training in advanced child-focused counseling strategies. When I employ my counseling techniques, I try to be more approachable and consistent, but I often feel that my ability is still insufficient to fully gain their trust and openness."*) (P10)

Based on the participants' accounts, P6 managed learners' behavioral concerns using simple counseling approaches such as verbal reminders, positive reinforcement, praise, and sticker charts. These strategies were developed mainly through classroom experience rather than formal training. Similarly, P10 experienced difficulty building trust with learners who displayed persistent behavioral issues and acknowledged lacking specialized knowledge and advanced counseling skills, despite efforts to remain approachable and consistent.

These findings suggest that insufficient training limits teachers' confidence and the effectiveness of their behavioral interventions. Garcia and Lim (2024) found that teachers with limited professional development in counseling were more likely to rely on punitive discipline than supportive behavior management strategies. Likewise, Bautista and Ramos (2025) emphasized that integrating child-focused counseling techniques into early childhood teacher education is essential for promoting inclusive and effective classroom practices.

➤ Emotional Burnout and Stress

Another major challenge experienced by kindergarten teachers in applying counseling techniques is emotional burnout and occupational stress. Constantly managing young learners with behavioral concerns, while balancing teaching and counseling responsibilities, places significant emotional demands on teachers. Without adequate support, these

challenges can affect both their well-being and their ability to consistently implement effective behavioral interventions.

This finding is supported by Santos et al. (2022), who reported that early childhood educators often experience high levels of stress and burnout because they are expected to serve as both teachers and informal counselors without sufficient training or support. Similarly, Garcia and Lim (2024) found that limited institutional support and the absence of mental health resources leave teachers feeling overwhelmed and frustrated when addressing complex behavioral issues. Participants likewise shared experiences that reflected the emotional burnout and stress they encountered in managing learners' behavior.

"Ang patuloy na behavioral issues ng aking mga learners ay malaki ang epekto sa aking counseling techniques dahil madalas akong nakakaramdam ng emotional burnout at stress. Dahil dito, ang aking mga teknik ay nagiging limitado sa pagpapatahimik ng kaguluhan, imbes na pag-alam sa ugat nito. Kapag ginagamit ko ang aking mga teknik, madalas ay nauuwi lang ako sa pag-distract o pagbibigay ng simpleng instructions dahil sa pagod." (*"My learners' constant behavioral issues significantly affect my counseling techniques because I often feel emotional burnout and stress. As a result, my techniques become limited to just calming down disruptions, rather than addressing the root cause. When I employ my techniques, I often resort to distraction or giving simple instructions due due to exhaustion."*) (P3)

"Ang mga hamon sa pag-uugali ng mga bata ay nakakaapekto sa aking counseling techniques dahil nahihirapan akong panatilihin ang aking pasensya at emotional regulation. Ang masasabi ko sa aking mga teknik ay minsan ay nagiging reactive ako sa halip na proactive, dahil sa tindi ng stress. Madalas, ini-employ ko ang aking mga teknik sa pagpapayo nang may pakiramdam ng pagmamadali, upang matapos na lang ang sitwasyon." (*"The behavioral challenges of the children affect my counseling techniques because I struggle to maintain my patience and emotional regulation. I'd say my techniques sometimes become reactive rather than proactive, due to the intensity of the stress. Often, I employ my counseling techniques with a sense of urgency, just to get the situation over with."*) (P5)

Based on the participants' narratives, P3 experienced emotional burnout from managing persistent behavioral issues, which limited their counseling techniques to calming learners through distractions or simple instructions rather than addressing underlying causes. Similarly, P5 found it difficult to maintain patience and emotional regulation, causing their counseling approaches to become reactive and focused on resolving situations quickly instead of providing preventive support. Meanwhile, P10 identified separation anxiety among learners transitioning from kindergarten to Grade One as a major challenge. To address this, the participant created a welcoming classroom environment, provided individualized attention, collaborated with parents, and used picture books to help children adjust, although these efforts were emotionally demanding.

These findings are consistent with Martinez and Robles (2021), who reported that administrative demands, large class sizes, and inadequate counseling training contribute to emotional fatigue and empathy fatigue among teachers. Likewise, Nguyen (2021) emphasized that burnout reduces teachers' sensitivity and responsiveness to children's emotional needs, making behavioral concerns more difficult to manage and limiting the effectiveness of early intervention.

➤ *Inadequate Institutional Support*

Another significant challenge faced by kindergarten teachers in applying counseling techniques is inadequate institutional support. Limited access to professional training, the absence of guidance counselors and school psychologists, insufficient behavioral intervention programs, and minimal administrative support make it difficult for teachers to effectively address learners' behavioral concerns. As a result, teachers are often left to manage complex situations on their own.

This finding is consistent with Martinez and Robles (2021), who reported that many schools, particularly those in rural and underfunded areas, lack trained counseling professionals, leaving teachers to handle behavioral issues without expert guidance. Similarly, Garcia and Lim (2024) emphasized that insufficient institutional support, including limited resources, inadequate time for behavioral planning, and the lack of collaboration with child development specialists, weakens teachers' ability to implement effective counseling practices. Participants' responses from the in-depth interviews likewise reflected these challenges related to inadequate institutional support.

"Ang mga behavioral challenges ng aking mga learners ay malaki ang epekto sa aking counseling techniques dahil sa kawalan ng malinaw na guidelines mula sa institusyon. Dahil dito, ang aking mga teknik ay nagiging puro trial and error, na hindi laging epektibo. Kapag ginagamit ko ang aking mga teknik, madalas ay umaasa lang ako sa aking instinct dahil walang sapat na resources na ibinigay." (*"My learners' behavioral challenges significantly affect my counseling techniques due to the lack of clear institutional guidelines. As a result, my techniques are based purely on trial and error, which isn't always effective. When I employ my techniques, I often rely solely on my instincts because insufficient resources are provided."*) (P4)

"Ang pag-uugali ng aking mga learners ay nakakaapekto sa aking counseling techniques sa paraang nahihirapan akong maghanap ng bagong estratehiya dahil sa limitadong access sa professional development. Ang masasabi ko sa aking mga teknik ay nananatili itong basic at hindi updated, dahil walang trainings na iniaalok. Kaya, ini-employ ko ang aking mga teknik gamit ang mga natutunan ko sa kolehiyo, na hindi na laging akma." (*"My learners' behaviors affect my counseling techniques as I struggle to find new strategies due to limited access to professional development. I'd say my techniques remain basic and outdated because no training is offered. Thus, I employ my techniques using what I learned in college, which isn't always suitable anymore."*) (P8)

From the participants' accounts, P4 revealed that the absence of clear institutional policies and adequate resources greatly influenced how they handled learners' behavioral concerns. Without structured guidance, they depended largely on personal experience, intuition, and trial-and-error approaches in providing counseling support. Likewise, P8 shared that limited opportunities for professional development prevented them from learning updated counseling strategies, causing them to rely on basic behavior management techniques that were not always effective in addressing the changing needs of young learners.

These findings are consistent with Santos et al. (2022), who emphasized that the lack of specialized training in child-focused counseling leaves teachers inadequately prepared to respond to behavioral challenges in early childhood classrooms. In the same way, Nguyen (2021) explained that weak institutional support often results in reactive behavior management policies rather than proactive interventions, forcing teachers to make decisions without established protocols and increasing the risk of inconsistent practices that may affect children's emotional well-being. Similar perspectives also emerged during the focus group discussions.

"Ang patuloy na behavioral issues ay nakaaapekto sa aking counseling techniques dahil madalas akong mag-isa sa pagharap sa mga bata, na kulang sa support staff mula sa institusyon. Dahil dito, ang aking mga teknik ay nagiging limitado sa pagpapanatili ng order, imbes na malalimang pagpapayo. Kaya, ini-employ ko ang aking mga teknik nang sabay-sabay sa pagtuturo, na nagpapahirap sa pagbibigay ng sapat na atensyon." (*"Constant behavioral issues affect my counseling techniques because I often face children alone, lacking support staff from the institution. Consequently, my techniques are limited to maintaining order, rather than in-depth counseling. So, I employ my techniques while simultaneously teaching, which makes it difficult to provide adequate attention."*)(P9)

Based on the participants' narratives, P9 shared that the combination of persistent learner behavioral issues and the

lack of institutional support staff limited the effectiveness of their counseling techniques. Because they had to manage classroom instruction and behavioral concerns simultaneously, their efforts focused mainly on maintaining classroom order rather than providing individualized counseling. This finding supports Anderson (2020), who noted that many early childhood educators work without clear behavioral intervention policies or accessible support systems, resulting in inconsistent counseling practices. Likewise, Tanaka (2022) found that even in well-developed education systems, teachers receive limited support for behavior counseling, including inadequate time for individualized planning and minimal collaboration with mental health professionals.

Three major themes emerged from the participants' responses: lack of training in child-focused counseling, emotional burnout and stress, and inadequate institutional support. Teachers acknowledged that although they promote learners' social and emotional development through everyday classroom activities, they often rely on general teaching practices rather than specialized counseling skills. As Rodriguez and Santos (2022) explained, this lack of formal training leaves teachers feeling unprepared to manage persistent or complex behavioral concerns, highlighting the need for targeted professional development in child-focused counseling.

Another key finding was that managing challenging learner behaviors without sufficient resources contributes to emotional exhaustion and stress among teachers. The absence of effective counseling skills, specialized personnel, and institutional support often forces teachers to depend on reactive behavior management instead of preventive interventions. Santos (2022) emphasized that preventive counseling is essential for developing children's emotional regulation and social skills, while Cruz (2023) underscored the importance of integrating counseling into daily classroom practices through strong administrative support. Without these support systems, teachers face greater challenges in providing comprehensive behavioral guidance to young learners.

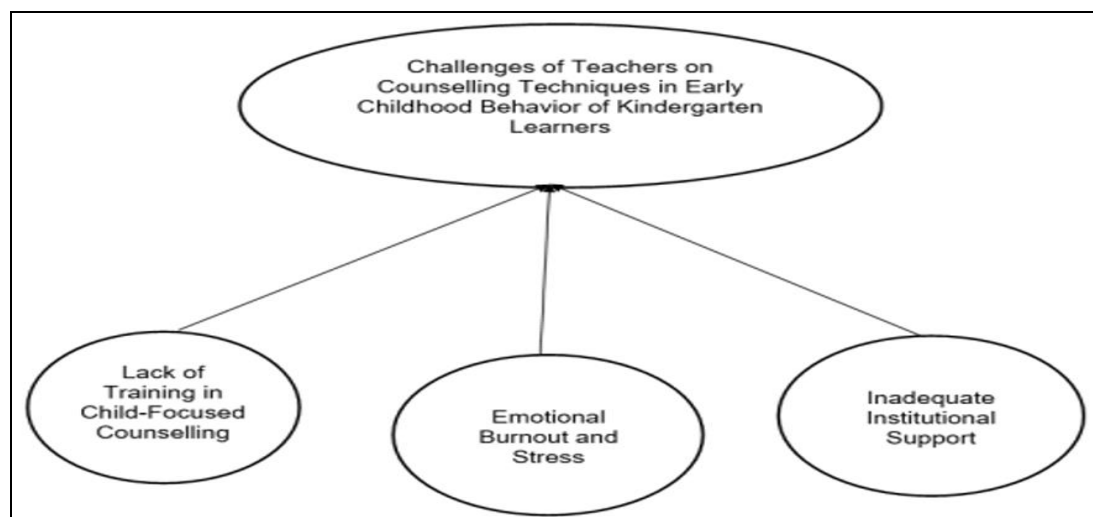


Fig 3 Emerging Themes on the Challenges of Teachers on Counseling Techniques in Early Childhood Behavior of Kindergarten Learners

B. Coping Mechanisms of Teachers with the Challenges on Counseling Techniques in Early Childhood Behavior

➤ Employing Classroom Management Techniques

A major challenge faced by kindergarten teachers in managing early childhood behavioral issues is the lack of comprehensive pre-service training in counseling techniques. Teacher education programs often emphasize academic instruction while giving limited attention to socio-emotional development and behavioral support. As a result, many teachers feel unprepared to address learners' behavioral concerns effectively.

This finding is supported by Hughes and Bell (2021), who noted that the limited integration of behavioral counseling and child development principles in teacher education reduces teachers' confidence and competence in managing behavioral issues. Likewise, Perez and Simon (2021) emphasized that insufficient practicum experiences in behavioral intervention leave teachers with little opportunity to apply counseling strategies in real classroom settings. During the interviews, participants also highlighted the importance of effective classroom management techniques in addressing learners' behavioral challenges.

"Dahil sa hindi sapat na pre-service training sa pagpapayo, ang aking pangunahing counseling technique na ginagamit ay basic classroom management, tulad ng paggamit ng visual cues at pagbibigay ng 'time-out'. Para matulungan ang mga learners na may behavioral challenges, madalas akong nag-oobserba nang mabuti at sinusubukang tukuyin ang trigger ng kanilang ugali. Umaasa akong sa paulit-ulit na pagpapaalala at simpleng konsekwensya ay matututo sila." (*"Due to insufficient pre-service training in counseling, my primary counseling technique used is basic classroom management, such as using visual cues and giving 'time-outs'. To help learners with behavioral challenges, I often observe carefully and try to identify the triggers of their behavior. I hope that through repeated reminders and simple consequences, they will learn."*)(P1)

"Ang mga counseling techniques na ginagamit ko ay nakatuon sa positive reinforcement, tulad ng sticker charts at verbal praises, ngunit kulang ito sa mas malalim na diskarte dahil sa hindi sapat na pre-service training. Para matulungan ang mga learners na may behavioral challenges, sinisikap kong bigyang-pansin ang kanilang maliliit na pagpapabuti at ipaalam sa kanila na pinapahalagahan sila. Nag-iisip din ako ng mga laro o aktibidad na magpapalabas ng kanilang enerhiya sa positibong paraan." (*"The counseling techniques I use focus on positive reinforcement, such as sticker charts and verbal praises, but it lacks a deeper approach due to insufficient pre-service training. To help learners with behavioral challenges, I try to acknowledge their small improvements and let them know they are valued. I also think of games or activities that will allow them to release their energy positively."*)(P2)

Based on the participants' narratives, P1 relied on basic classroom management strategies, such as visual cues, time-outs, and repeated reminders, to address learners' behavioral

concerns because of limited pre-service training in counseling. Similarly, P2 mainly used positive reinforcement, including praise, sticker charts, and engaging activities, but recognized that their lack of formal counseling preparation restricted their ability to apply more advanced interventions.

These findings support Kennedy and Rowe (2022), who found a gap between child development theories taught in teacher education and their practical application in managing classroom behaviors. Likewise, Lim and Carter (2022) emphasized that inadequate preparation in inclusive education leaves teachers less equipped to respond effectively to the behavioral needs of children with diverse learning profiles. Similar experiences were shared by other participants during the in-depth interviews.

"Ang aking mga counseling techniques ay madalas na improvised o hango sa nakita ko sa iba, dahil sa hindi sapat na pre-service training sa pagharap sa kumplikadong behavioral issues. Para matulungan ang mga learners na may behavioral challenges, madalas akong lumalapit sa mga mas beteranong guro para humingi ng payo at estratehiya. Ginagawa ko rin ang pagbabasa ng mga artikulo online para makakuha ng karagdagang ideya." (*"My counseling techniques are often improvised or borrowed from what I've seen others do, due to insufficient pre-service training in dealing with complex behavioral issues. To help learners with behavioral challenges, I often approach more veteran teachers for advice and strategies. I also read articles online to gain additional ideas."*)(P4)

The participants' responses showed that P4 often improvised counseling techniques or sought guidance from experienced teachers and online resources because of limited pre-service training in managing complex behavioral concerns. This reliance on self-directed learning reflects the need for stronger preparation in child-focused counseling before entering the teaching profession.

These findings are consistent with Jordan and Ellis (2023), who emphasized that teacher education programs often lack training in emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and empathy—essential skills for effective counseling. Similarly, Smith and Navarro (2023) argued that limited collaboration between teacher education institutions and child psychology experts results in outdated or superficial counseling preparation, leaving new teachers inadequately equipped to support learners' emotional and behavioral needs.

➤ Responding with Proactive Solutions

Kindergarten teachers often experience a mismatch between their teaching responsibilities and the increasing expectation to manage learners' behavioral and emotional concerns. Without sufficient counseling training or institutional support, balancing academic instruction with behavioral intervention becomes challenging and contributes to stress.

This finding is supported by Lopez and Daniels (2021), who noted that early childhood educators are expected to promote both academic and socio-emotional development

despite limited preparation in counseling. Similarly, Foster and Clarke (2021) found that the lack of institutional support forces teachers to depend on peer advice and self-developed strategies, which may be inconsistent and less effective. Participants likewise shared experiences reflecting this conflict between teaching responsibilities and behavioral intervention expectations.

"Ang isa sa mga hamon ay ang misalignment sa pagitan ng aking responsibilidad sa pagtuturo at ang inaasahang behavioral intervention. Madalas, ang aking mga counseling techniques ay binubuo ng mabilisang pagpapayo habang nagtuturo pa rin ako. Para matulungan ang mga learners na may behavioral challenges, sinisikap kong magbigay ng mabilis na verbal cues o pag-distract, dahil kailangan kong panatilihin ang focus ng buong klase sa aralin." (*"One of the challenges is the misalignment between my teaching responsibilities and the expected behavioral intervention. Often, my counseling techniques consist of quick advice while I'm still teaching. To help learners with behavioral challenges, I try to give quick verbal cues or distractions, as I need to keep the entire class focused on the lesson."*) (P3)

"Ang aking mga counseling techniques ay apektado dahil sa inaasahan na gagampanan ko ang papel ng guidance counselor habang limitado ang oras ko para sa detalyadong interbensyon. Sa aking mga teknik, mas nakatuon ako sa immediate suppression ng hindi kanais-nais na pag-uugali. Para matulungan ang mga learners, ang ginagawa ko ay nagbibigay ako ng mga 'time-out' at nagpapaalala ng rules, dahil wala akong sapat na oras para sa malalimang pag-uusap." (*"My counseling techniques are affected by the expectation that I play the role of a guidance counselor while having limited time for detailed intervention. In my techniques, I focus more on the immediate suppression of undesirable behavior. To help learners, what I do is give 'time-outs' and remind them of rules, because I don't have enough time for in-depth conversations."*) (P5)

The participants' accounts revealed that P3 addressed learners' behavioral concerns through brief interventions such as verbal prompts, short guidance, and distraction techniques while managing regular classroom activities. Meanwhile, P5 experienced difficulty providing more comprehensive counseling due to limited time and the added expectation of taking on a counselor-like role. As a result, the participant often relied on immediate behavior control strategies, including reminders of rules and temporary separation, rather than conducting extended discussions with learners.

These findings are consistent with Nguyen and Brooks (2022), who highlighted that limited instructional time makes it challenging for teachers to balance academic responsibilities with effective behavioral support. Likewise, Allen and Monroe (2022) explained that unclear guidelines on teachers' roles in behavioral counseling contribute to uncertainty, inconsistent interventions, and increased emotional pressure. Other participants also shared similar experiences regarding the challenges of addressing learners' behavioral concerns.

"Ang mga behavioral challenges ng aking mga learners ay malaki ang epekto sa aking counseling techniques dahil madalas, ako lang ang tanging resource na umaasikaso sa kanilang pag-uugali, bukod pa sa pagtuturo. Dahil dito, ang aking mga teknik ay nagiging mas reactive kaysa proactive, dahil ako ang unang sumasalo sa bawat insidente. Kapag ginagamit ko ang aking mga teknik, madalas ay nakakaramdam ako ng labis na responsibilidad na hindi tugma sa aking Job description." (*"My learners' behavioral challenges significantly affect my counseling techniques because often, I am the sole resource addressing their behavior, in addition to teaching. As a result, my techniques become more reactive than proactive, as I am the first to deal with every incident. When I employ my techniques, I often feel an overwhelming responsibility that doesn't align with my job description."*)(P7)

The participant shared that learners' behavioral difficulties affected their counseling practices because they were expected to manage both instruction and behavior concerns without additional support. As a result, their approaches became more reactive, focusing on immediate solutions rather than preventive interventions due to the overwhelming demands placed on them.

To cope with these challenges, teachers often use personal strategies such as mindfulness, peer support, and reflective journaling to manage stress and maintain emotional well-being (Zhang & Keller, 2023). However, these approaches serve only as temporary measures and cannot replace the need for stronger institutional support and structured interventions.

Teachers also experience professional isolation because of limited access to collaborative support from school counselors, psychologists, and other specialists. This lack of interdisciplinary assistance increases their responsibilities and reduces their ability to provide comprehensive academic, emotional, and behavioral support to learners (Whitman & Grey, 2023).

➤ Understanding Learners' Background

A significant challenge in early childhood behavior counseling is the limited use of culturally responsive approaches, which may result in misunderstanding learners' behaviors and ineffective interventions (Lee & Morgan, 2020). Teachers often find that existing counseling frameworks do not fully consider the diverse cultural experiences and backgrounds of their learners.

This finding aligns with Singh and Wallace (2021), who emphasized that standardized behavior management models may overlook cultural differences in how children express emotions and behaviors, leading to misinterpretation of their actions. Furthermore, Peters and Daniels (2021) noted that insufficient training in multicultural sensitivity leaves teachers less prepared to address behavioral concerns influenced by children's social and family contexts. During the interviews, participants shared experiences that reflected these challenges, which were further supported by another participant during the discussion.

"Ang mga behavioral challenges ng aking mga learners ay malaki ang epekto sa aking counseling techniques dahil madalas akong nahihirapan sa pag-unawa sa cultural nuances ng kanilang pag-uugali. Ang aking mga teknik ay karaniwang generic at hindi nakatuon sa kanilang cultural background. Para matulungan ang mga learners, sinisikap kong makipag-usap sa mga magulang, ngunit kulang ako sa kaalaman kung paano isasama ang cultural context sa aking pagpapayo." (*"My learners' behavioral challenges significantly affect my counseling techniques because I often struggle with understanding the cultural nuances of their behavior. My techniques are usually generic and not focused on their cultural background. To help learners, I try to communicate with parents, but I lack knowledge on how to incorporate cultural context into my counseling."*)(P6)

"Ang pag-uugali ng aking mga learners ay nakaaapekto sa aking counseling techniques sa paraang nahihirapan akong magtatag ng malalim na koneksyon dahil sa iba't ibang kultura namin. Ang masasabi ko sa aking mga teknik ay limitado ito sa verbal instructions, imbes na gumamit ng culturally relevant na storytelling o metaphor. Para matulungan ang mga learners, sinusubukan kong mag-research ng kanilang kultura online, ngunit hindi ito sapat upang ganap na makapagbigay ng culturally responsive na gabay." (*"My learners' behaviors affect my counseling techniques in a way that I struggle to establish a deep connection due to cultural differences. I'd say my techniques are limited to verbal instructions, rather than using culturally relevant storytelling or metaphors. To help learners, I try to research their culture online, but this is not enough to provide fully culturally responsive guidance."*)(P8)

The participants' narratives revealed that P6 experienced difficulty applying culturally responsive counseling because of limited understanding of learners' cultural backgrounds. Although the participant communicated with parents, their counseling approaches remained general and did not fully incorporate cultural perspectives. Similarly, P8 found it challenging to build meaningful relationships with learners from different cultural backgrounds, relying mainly on verbal instructions while recognizing that culturally relevant strategies such as storytelling were lacking. Despite researching cultural practices independently, the participant felt inadequately prepared to provide culturally responsive guidance.

These findings are consistent with Rodriguez and Chan (2022), who explained that language and communication barriers can weaken behavior interventions and hinder trust between teachers, learners, and families. Likewise, Kaur and Ellis (2022) emphasized that the use of generalized behavior management strategies often overlooks learners' sociocultural differences, reducing the effectiveness of counseling interventions. Similar experiences were also shared by other participants during the focus group discussion.

"Ang patuloy na behavioral issues ay nakaaapekto sa aking counseling techniques dahil minsan ay ginagamit ko ang mga estratehiyang hindi gaanong naaangkop sa kanilang kultura, dahil sa kakulangan sa culturally responsive counseling strategies. Ang masasabi ko sa aking mga teknik

ay hindi laging nagiging epektibo ang mga ito sa lahat ng bata. Para matulungan ang mga learners, sinusubukan kong maging mas mapagmasid sa kanilang social cues, ngunit umaasa pa rin ako sa generic approaches." (*"Constant behavioral issues affect my counseling techniques because I sometimes use strategies that are not entirely culturally appropriate, due to a lack of culturally responsive counseling strategies. I'd say my techniques are not always effective for all children. To help learners, I try to be more observant of their social cues, but I still rely on generic approaches."*)(P9)

"Ang early childhood behavior ng aking mga learners ay malaki ang epekto sa aking counseling techniques dahil nahihirapan akong intindihin ang cultural context ng pagtugon ng mga magulang sa kanilang anak. Ang masasabi ko sa aking mga teknik ay madalas ay nagbibigay ako ng payo na hindi tugma sa kanilang cultural parenting practices. Para matulungan ang mga learners, sinisikap kong maging sensitibo sa mga pagkakaiba, ngunit kulang pa rin ako sa pormal na pagsasanay kung paano magbigay ng counseling na may cultural sensitivity." (*"My learners' early childhood behaviors significantly affect my counseling techniques because I struggle to understand the cultural context of parents' responses to their children. I'd say my techniques often give advice that doesn't align with their cultural parenting practices. To help learners, I try to be sensitive to differences, but I still lack formal training on how to provide counseling with cultural sensitivity."*)(P10)

The participants' narratives showed that P9 and P10 experienced difficulties applying culturally responsive counseling techniques when addressing learners' behavioral concerns. P9 admitted relying on general behavior management strategies because of limited knowledge of culturally responsive practices, while P10 struggled to provide guidance that aligned with families' cultural parenting practices despite making efforts to respect cultural differences. These findings support Brown and Fisher (2023), who reported that teachers experience stress and reduced confidence when their interventions do not align with learners' cultural contexts. Similarly, Ahmed and Silva (2023) noted that the lack of professional dialogue and training on culturally responsive practices often forces teachers to rely on trial-and-error approaches.

Thematic analysis identified three major coping strategies used by kindergarten teachers in addressing early childhood behavioral challenges: employing classroom management techniques, implementing proactive solutions, and understanding learners' backgrounds. Teachers commonly used classroom management strategies such as redirection, positive reinforcement, and structured routines to maintain order, although these approaches often addressed only immediate behaviors rather than their underlying causes. As emphasized by Granger et al. (2024), positive teacher-learner relationships support classroom management, but evidence-based behavioral interventions remain essential for lasting behavioral improvement.

Teachers also attempted to respond proactively and understand learners' backgrounds despite limited training,

institutional support, and culturally responsive preparation. Many relied on personal experience and judgment because of inadequate access to counseling resources and professional development. Fawley-King et al. (2021) highlighted that targeted training in behavior management enhances teachers' competence and reduces stress, while Rocaberte (2024)

emphasized the need for structured counseling tools and culturally responsive strategies. Overall, the findings suggest that although teachers demonstrate resilience and adaptability, strengthening professional training and institutional support is essential for more effective, inclusive, and sustainable behavior management.

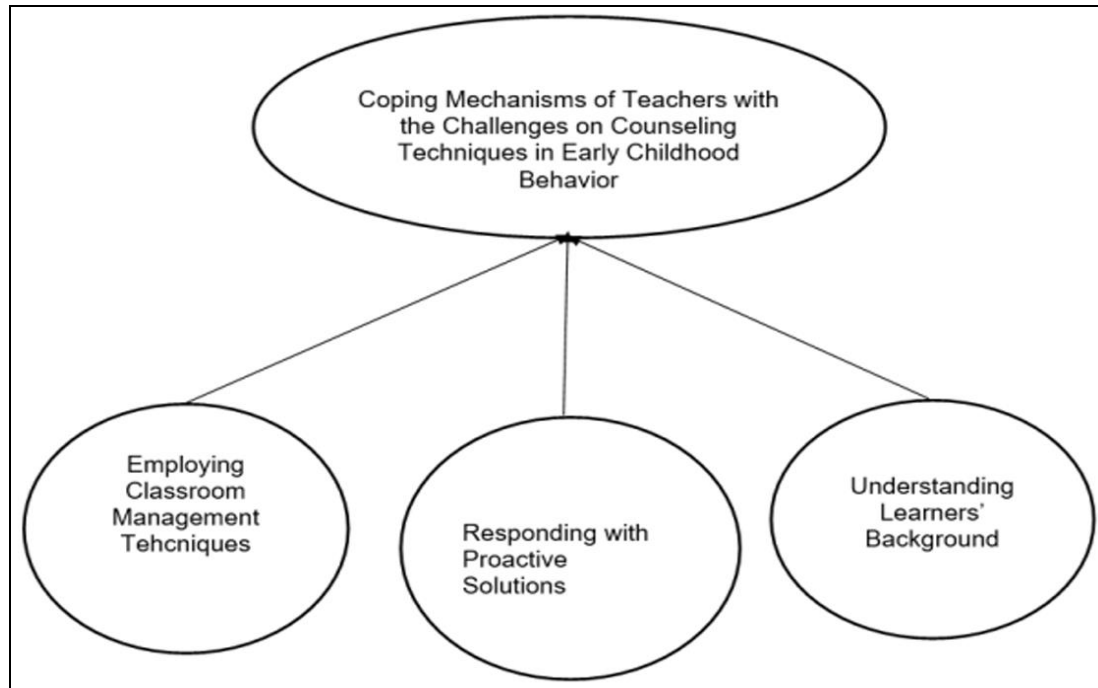


Fig 4 Emerging Themes on the Coping Mechanisms of Teachers with the Challenges on Counseling Techniques in Early Childhood Behavior

C. Educational Management Insights Drawn on Counselling Techniques in Early Childhood Behavior of Kindergarten Learners

➤ Improving Communication Systems

A major challenge in implementing effective counseling techniques is the presence of fragmented communication systems within early childhood education. Poor coordination among school administrators, teachers, and support personnel often delays appropriate behavioral interventions and limits the consistency of support provided to young learners.

This finding is supported by Nguyen and Patel (2021), who explained that communication gaps among stakeholders prevent teachers from accessing important behavioral information and counseling insights, making it more difficult to respond promptly to learners' behavioral concerns. Likewise, Adams and Lee (2021) emphasized that the absence of clear referral procedures, consistent documentation, and well-defined communication channels weakens collaboration between teachers and counseling personnel.

Participants also highlighted the importance of improving communication systems within schools. They emphasized that stronger coordination, clearer referral processes, and regular information sharing among educators and support staff are essential for providing timely and effective behavioral interventions for young learners.

"Narealize ko mula sa aking mga karanasan na ang kakulangan ng tuloy-tuloy na impormasyon mula sa mga magulang ay malaking hadlang sa epektibong pagpapayo. Para palakasin ang aming mga teknik, dapat magtatag ang pamunuan ng isang standardized at accessible na sistema ng komunikasyon para sa mga magulang at guro. Ito ay magbibigay ng komprehensibong background sa bawat bata, na mahalaga sa pagtukoy ng ugat ng kanilang pag-uugali." ("I realized from my experiences that the lack of continuous information from parents is a major hindrance to effective counseling. To strengthen our techniques, the administration should establish a standardized and accessible communication system for parents and teachers. This would provide comprehensive background on each child, which is crucial in identifying the root cause of their behavior.") (P1)

"Ang aking realisasyon ay ang pakiramdam na isolated ako sa paggabay ng mga batang may behavioral challenges dahil sa fragmented communication systems sa pagitan ng mga guro. Para palakasin ang counseling techniques, kailangan ng paaralan ang regular at structured platforms para sa mga guro, tulad ng weekly case discussions. Ito ay magbibigay-daan sa kolektibong pagbabahagi ng estratehiya at pagsuporta sa isa't isa, na magpapabuti sa aming kakayahan." ("My realization is feeling isolated in guiding children with behavioral challenges due to fragmented communication systems among teachers. To strengthen counseling techniques, the school needs regular and

structured platforms for teachers, such as weekly case discussions. This would allow for collective sharing of strategies and mutual support, improving our capabilities.") (P2)

The participants' narratives revealed that P1 identified limited communication with parents as a barrier to effective counseling and recommended establishing a standardized and accessible communication system between home and school. Similarly, P2 shared feeling isolated when managing learners with behavioral concerns because of weak communication among teachers, suggesting regular case conferences and structured discussions to improve collaboration and strengthen counseling practices.

These findings support Grant and Wilson (2022), who emphasized that limited teacher participation in behavior-related decision-making reduces the effectiveness of counseling interventions. Likewise, Baker and Thomas (2022) noted that although digital communication tools can improve collaboration, they are often underutilized in early childhood settings, resulting in delayed reporting of behavioral concerns and limited guidance from school leaders and specialists. Similar views were expressed by other participants during the interviews.

"Narealize ko na ang kawalan ng cohesive na sistema sa pag-referral sa mga guidance counselor o psychologist ay nakakaapekto sa pagpapayo. Kadalasan, ako ang unang sumasalo ng problema nang walang malinaw na proseso. Para palakasin ang counseling techniques, dapat magtatag ang institusyon ng malinaw na referral pathway na alam ng lahat, mula sa guro hanggang sa mga espesyalista. Ito ay magsisiguro ng tamang antas ng interbensyon para sa bawat bata." ("I realized that the absence of a cohesive referral system to guidance counselors or psychologists affects counseling. Often, I'm the first to address the problem without a clear process. To strengthen counseling techniques, the institution should establish a clear referral pathway known to everyone, from teachers to specialists. This would ensure the appropriate level of intervention for each child.") (P5)

"Ang aking realisasyon ay ang hindi consistent na pagbabahagi ng impormasyon sa behavioral patterns ng mga bata sa bawat grade level. Ang kasaysayan ng pag-uugali ng bata ay hindi laging naipapasa. Para palakasin ang counseling techniques, dapat magpatupad ang pamunuan ng isang centralized student information system na kasama ang behavioral observations at intervention notes. Ito ay magbibigay ng mas kumpletong larawan ng bata sa lahat ng guro na hahawak sa kanya sa mga susunod na taon." ("My realization is the inconsistent sharing of information on children's behavioral patterns across different grade levels. A child's behavioral history isn't always passed on. To strengthen counseling techniques, the administration should implement a centralized student information system that includes behavioral observations and intervention notes. This would provide a more complete picture of the child to all teachers who will handle them in subsequent years.") (P6)

The participants' narratives showed that P5 recognized the need for a clear referral system to guidance counselors or psychologists to ensure that learners with behavioral concerns receive appropriate support. Likewise, P6 emphasized the importance of a centralized student information system that documents behavioral observations and intervention records, allowing teachers across grade levels to provide more consistent and informed counseling.

These findings are supported by Hernandez and Cooper (2023), who highlighted that limited training in collaborative communication weakens teachers' ability to coordinate behavioral interventions. Similarly, Omar and Simmons (2023) emphasized that clear communication protocols and regular feedback mechanisms promote timely, coordinated, and child-centered decision-making, resulting in more effective behavioral support.

➤ Integrating Data-driven Behavior Monitoring

The use of data-driven behavior monitoring systems can strengthen counseling practices by providing teachers with timely information about learners' emotional and behavioral patterns. Behavior tracking tools can improve coordination among teachers, administrators, and counselors while helping identify concerns such as aggression, withdrawal, and hyperactivity at an early stage (Chen & Dawson, 2021).

However, limited teacher training in analyzing and applying behavioral data remains a challenge. Lopez and Harper (2021) noted that teachers may receive behavioral information without sufficient guidance on how to interpret or use it effectively, reducing its value in classroom counseling. Participants also shared their experiences and perspectives regarding the use of data-driven behavior monitoring during the interviews.

"Narealize ko mula sa aking mga karanasan na ang pagharap sa behavioral challenges ay nangangailangan ng konkretong ebidensya, hindi lang anecdotal observations. Dati, umaasa lang ako sa aking pakiramdam. Para palakasin ang aming mga teknik, dapat magpatupad ang paaralan ng isang standardized na sistema para sa data-driven behavior monitoring, kung saan regular kaming nagtatala ng specific instances at triggers ng pag-uugali. Ito ay magbibigay ng mas malinaw na larawan at batayan sa pagpapalano ng interbensyon." ("I realized from my experiences that addressing behavioral challenges requires concrete evidence, not just anecdotal observations. Previously, I relied solely on my feelings. To strengthen our techniques, the school should implement a standardized system for data-driven behavior monitoring, where we regularly record specific instances and triggers of behavior. This would provide a clearer picture and basis for intervention planning.") (P3)

"Ang aking realisasyon ay ang kahalagahan ng pagsubaybay sa progresong pang-uugali ng mga bata gamit ang data. Dati, mahirap sukatin kung gaano kabisa ang aking mga interbensyon. Para palakasin ang counseling techniques, kailangan natin ng mga user-friendly tools para sa data collection at visualization ng behavioral patterns ng mga bata. Ito ay magpapahintulot sa amin na mas mabilis na makita

kung ano ang gumagana at kung ano ang kailangan pang baguhin sa aming diskarte.” (*“My realization is the importance of tracking children's behavioral progress using data. Previously, it was difficult to measure how effective my interventions were. To strengthen counseling techniques, we need user-friendly tools for data collection and visualization of children's behavioral patterns. This would allow us to more quickly see what works and what needs to be changed in our approach.”*) (P4)

The participants' responses showed that P3 recognized the importance of using concrete behavioral evidence rather than relying only on personal observations. The participant recommended a standardized monitoring system that records specific behaviors and their triggers to guide more appropriate interventions. Similarly, P4 emphasized tracking learners' behavioral progress through accessible data collection and visualization tools to determine which strategies are effective and which require modification.

These findings are supported by Nakamura and Ellis (2022), who noted that data visualization tools can improve decision-making and support timely, individualized counseling interventions. However, Kim and Walton (2022) cautioned that excessive or poorly organized information may overwhelm teachers and reduce the usefulness of behavioral monitoring. During the FGD, another participant likewise highlighted the importance of using data to monitor and guide behavioral interventions.

“Ang aking realisasyon ay ang pagiging mas epektibo ng komunikasyon sa mga magulang kung ito ay batay sa ebidensya at datos. Dati, minsan ay nagiging emosyonal ang usapan. Para palakasin ang counseling techniques, dapat nating gamitin ang data-driven behavior monitoring para magkaroon ng factual na basehan sa pag-uusap sa mga magulang tungkol sa progreso ng kanilang anak. Ito ay magtatatag ng mas matibay na partnership at makakatulong sa paggawa ng shared strategies para sa bata.” (*“My realization is that communication with parents becomes more effective when it is based on evidence and data. Previously, conversations sometimes became emotional. To strengthen counseling techniques, we should use data-driven behavior monitoring to have a factual basis for discussing their child's progress with parents. This would establish a stronger partnership and help in creating shared strategies for the child.”*) (P7)

The participant recognized that parent communication became more productive when supported by objective behavioral records. They recommended using data-driven monitoring to provide concrete evidence during discussions with parents, strengthen home-school partnerships, and develop consistent strategies for supporting the child.

This finding is supported by Martinez and Cole (2023), who emphasized that regular data review among school personnel promotes consistent counseling practices and helps align interventions with learners' needs. However, Singh and Morris (2023) highlighted the importance of protecting learners' privacy when collecting behavioral information,

requiring schools to establish clear guidelines for the proper collection, storage, and use of sensitive data.

➤ Adopting Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

The participants emphasized the importance of adopting Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) as a structured approach to addressing early childhood behavioral concerns. MTSS provides preventive and intervention strategies that match learners' varying behavioral and emotional needs. Its tiered framework includes universal classroom support, targeted interventions, and individualized assistance, supported by screening and data-informed decision-making (Martin & Diaz, 2021).

However, effective implementation remains challenging because teachers may lack clear procedures, appropriate training, and consistent methods for collecting behavioral data. Garcia and Thompson (2021) noted that weak school-wide protocols can result in inconsistent and fragmented interventions. During the FGD, participants highlighted the need for educational management to strengthen and prioritize the implementation of MTSS to ensure coordinated and responsive behavioral support.

“Narealize ko mula sa aking mga karanasan na ang pagharap sa behavioral challenges ay nangangailangan ng sistematisong suporta, hindi lang ad-hoc na pagtugon. Dati, magkanya-kanya kami sa pagharap sa mga ugali. Para palakasin ang aming mga teknik, dapat mag-adopt ang paaralan ng isang Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), na may iba't ibang antas ng interbensyon para sa iba't ibang pangangailangan ng mga bata. Ito ay magbibigay ng malinaw na balangkas sa pagsuporta.” (*“I realized from my experiences that addressing behavioral challenges requires systematic support, not just an ad-hoc response. Previously, we dealt with behaviors individually. To strengthen our techniques, the school should adopt a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), with different tiers of intervention for varying student needs. This would provide a clear framework for support.”*) (P8)

“Ang aking realisasyon ay ang pagkakaiba-iba ng intensity ng interbensyon na kailangan ng bawat bata; hindi lahat ay nangangailangan ng parehong antas ng pagpapayo. Dati, iisa lang ang diskarte ko sa lahat. Para palakasin ang counseling techniques, kailangan natin ng mga tool at pagsasanay sa pagtukoy kung kailan at paano ilalapat ang bawat tier ng MTSS, mula sa universal support hanggang sa mas intensive na gabay. Ito ay magbibigay ng mas angkop na suporta.” (*“My realization is the varying intensity of intervention each child needs; not everyone requires the same level of counseling. Previously, I had a one-size-fits-all approach. To strengthen counseling techniques, we need tools and training in identifying when and how to apply each tier of MTSS, from universal support to more intensive guidance. This would provide more appropriate support.”*) (P9)

The participants emphasized that behavioral concerns require a structured and differentiated support system rather than isolated or improvised responses. P8 recommended adopting the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) to

provide organized levels of intervention, while P9 recognized that learners have different needs and require varying degrees of support. The participant also stressed the importance of providing teachers with appropriate tools and training to determine when each MTSS tier should be applied.

These findings are supported by Nguyen and Patel (2022), who emphasized that effective MTSS implementation requires collaboration among teachers, school leaders, and mental health professionals to ensure that interventions are responsive to learners' needs. Similarly, Harris and Young (2023) highlighted the value of continuous professional development in strengthening teachers' ability to identify behavioral concerns and apply appropriate strategies, including positive reinforcement and effective classroom management. The same theme was also reflected in the participants' responses during the FGD.

"Narealize ko na ang pagiging epektibo sa paggabay sa pag-uugali ay nangangailangan ng collaborative approach mula sa buong paaralan, hindi lang sa isang guro. Ang aking karanasan ay nagpapakita na mas epektibo ang interbensyon kung lahat ay may papel. Para palakasin ang counseling techniques, dapat magtatag ang MTSS ng mga team na regular na magpupulong para talakayin ang behavioral data at magplano ng mga interbensyon sa bawat tier. Ito ay magsisiguro ng pagkakaisa sa diskarte." (*"I realized that effectiveness in guiding behavior requires a collaborative approach from the entire school, not just one teacher. My experience shows that interventions are more effective when everyone plays a role. To strengthen counseling techniques, MTSS should establish teams that meet regularly to discuss behavioral data and plan interventions at each tier. This would ensure consistency in approach."*)(P10)

The participant emphasized that effective behavioral support should involve the entire school community rather

than relying solely on individual teachers. They recommended using MTSS to establish collaborative teams that regularly review behavioral data and develop tiered interventions. This approach promotes consistency, supports early identification of concerns, and allows timely intervention during the critical kindergarten years (Bennett & Cruz, 2022). However, successful implementation may be limited by insufficient time, data systems, and support personnel (Olsen & Rivera, 2024).

Three major themes emerged from the participants' responses: improving communication systems, integrating data-driven behavior monitoring, and adopting a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). Strengthening communication through case conferences, feedback mechanisms, and centralized documentation can improve coordination among teachers, administrators, and support personnel. Larson and Hartman (2021) noted that teachers with knowledge of child psychology and conflict resolution are better prepared to provide preventive counseling, but effective communication remains essential for translating individual efforts into coordinated school-wide practices.

The second theme, data-driven behavior monitoring, highlights the need for systematic tools to document behavioral patterns and evaluate interventions. Standardized observation procedures and accessible digital tools can help teachers make timely, objective, and individualized decisions (Martinez & Lee, 2023). The third theme, MTSS, provides varying levels of support, from universal classroom interventions to targeted and intensive assistance for learners with greater needs. Granger et al. (2024) emphasized that early emotional support can reduce behavioral difficulties. Overall, stronger communication, effective use of behavioral data, and institutionalized MTSS can promote coordinated, evidence-based, and sustainable support for young learners.

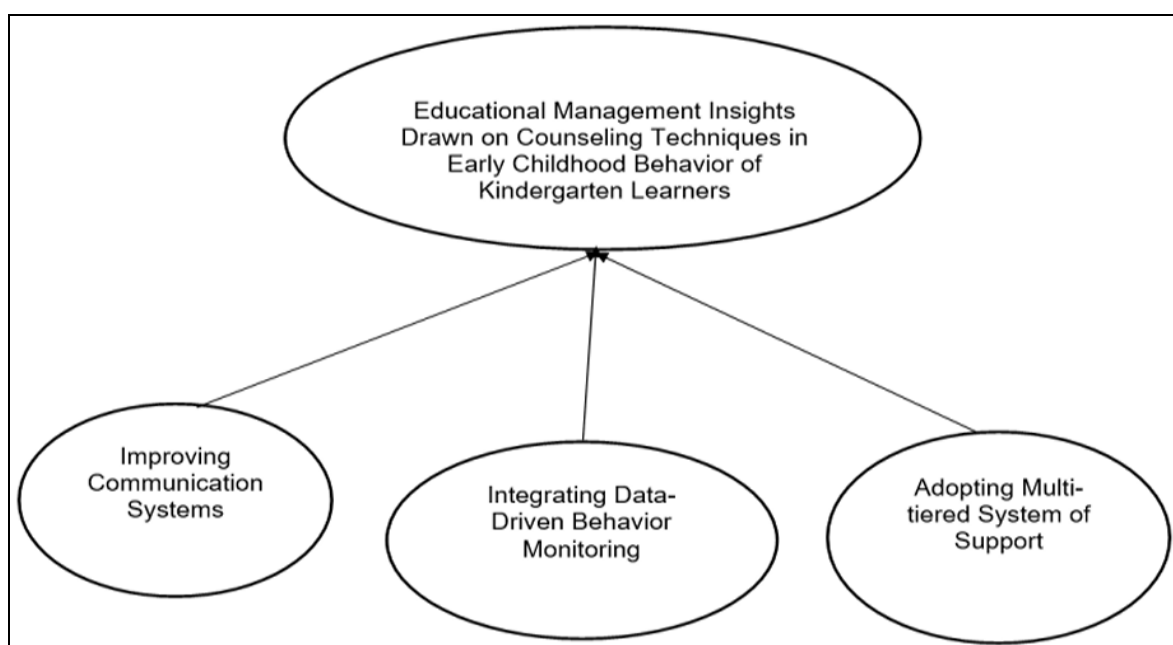


Fig 5 Emerging Themes on the Educational Management Insights Drawn on Counseling Techniques in Early Childhood Behavior of Kindergarten Learners

IV. IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

➤ Implications

The findings highlight the need to strengthen kindergarten teachers' counseling practices through appropriate training and institutional support. The lack of child-focused counseling preparation can be addressed through professional development grounded in Beck's Cognitive Behavioral Theory (CBT), which can equip teachers with strategies for recognizing behavioral triggers, reframing challenging situations, and teaching learners appropriate coping skills. Meanwhile, teacher burnout and stress emphasize the relevance of Rogers' Humanistic Therapy, which promotes empathy, acceptance, and a supportive environment. Skinner's Operant Conditioning further suggests that schools should reinforce effective counseling practices by providing adequate resources, training, time, and administrative recognition.

Three major coping strategies emerged: classroom management, proactive responses, and understanding learners' backgrounds. Classroom management reflects behavioral principles through reinforcement and appropriate consequences, but teachers need training to ensure these strategies are positive and developmentally appropriate. Proactive responses are consistent with CBT, encouraging teachers to identify triggers, understand behaviors as possible expressions of emotional needs, and guide learners toward healthier responses. Understanding learners' cultural, family, and emotional backgrounds reflects the humanistic approach, emphasizing empathy, acceptance, and individualized support rather than relying solely on generalized interventions.

The study also identified three key educational management strategies: improving communication systems, using data-driven behavior monitoring, and adopting a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). Strong communication among teachers, administrators, and support personnel promotes consistent interventions, while behavioral data helps identify patterns and guide evidence-based decisions. MTSS integrates the three theories by providing universal support through behavioral strategies, targeted interventions using CBT-based approaches, and individualized assistance grounded in empathy and personal growth. Overall, sustainable counseling practices require continuous teacher development, adequate resources, collaborative systems, culturally responsive approaches, and strong institutional leadership.

➤ Future Directions

Future research and practice should focus on strengthening evidence-based and developmentally appropriate counseling strategies for kindergarten learners. Learners should be supported through activities that develop emotional regulation, empathy, and social problem-solving, while teachers need practical training through coaching, simulations, role-playing, and peer collaboration. Stronger home-school partnerships should also be promoted through parent education, positive discipline strategies, and accessible communication. School administrators should provide

adequate resources, reduce teacher workload, and strengthen access to specialized support personnel.

At the policy level, the Department of Education should integrate child psychology, behavior management, and counseling techniques into teacher preparation and professional development programs while providing resources for implementation. Future researchers should further examine the long-term effectiveness of counseling strategies, culturally responsive practices, technology-assisted interventions, and institutional support systems across diverse early childhood settings. These efforts can contribute to sustainable, inclusive, and evidence-informed behavioral support for both teachers and young learners.

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