



PREDICTOR VARIABLES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TEACHERS' COMPETENCIES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN GINGOOG CITY

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ABSTRACT

Education is an important part in shaping the future of every child on the competence of teachers who guide the students during the formation years. There is limited research on how professional development, digital literacy skills, and socio-emotional skills influence the teaching competence of early childhood educators, particularly in Gingoog City. This descriptive–correlational research design study examined the predictor variables in terms of professional development engagement, digital literacy skills, and socio-emotional skills on the teaching competence of early childhood teachers in public schools in Gingoog City. A total of 111 early childhood teachers participated using total enumeration method. Data were collected through a validated and reliable research-made questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, including the mean and standard deviation, and Multiple Regression Analysis were employed. Descriptive results revealed that participants demonstrated High to Very High level of professional development engagement, High level of digital literacy skills, Very High level of socio-emotional skills, and teaching competence. Multiple regression analysis showed that the combination of professional engagement, digital literacy and socio-emotional skills of teachers significantly influence their teaching competence. Among the three predictors, socio-emotional skills emerged as the only significant predictor of teaching competence, while professional development engagement and digital literacy skills were not statistically significant predictors. The findings highlight that teachers' emotional regulation, empathy, interpersonal awareness, and inclusive practices play a crucial role in strengthening pedagogical skills, classroom management, and assessment practices. In order to support teachers' well-being and instructional effectiveness, the study suggests that the Department of Education together with the school administrators bolster initiatives that improve teachers' socio-emotional

competencies, offer pertinent professional development programs, enhance training in digital literacy, and foster professional learning communities. To further investigate the long-term effects of socio-emotional abilities on teaching effectiveness and student outcomes, future researchers are urged to investigate additional predictors of teaching competency and carry out longitudinal studies.

Keywords: *professional development engagement, digital literacy skills, socio-emotional skills, teaching competence, early childhood education*

INTRODUCTION

Children's intellectual, social, and emotional development is greatly influenced by their education. The proficiency of educators who mentor students during their early years has a significant impact on the quality of education they receive. Teachers in early childhood education are in charge of supporting children's emotional development, social awareness, and general well-being in addition to their cognitive and literacy growth. Early childhood instructors' competences have a big impact on children's academic preparedness and overall development since young learners are more sensitive to their learning environment. Thus, to guarantee successful teaching methods and favorable learning outcomes, teachers must get ongoing assistance and preparation. These factors emphasize the significance of digital literacy, socioemotional skills, and professional development involvement in enhancing teacher competency.

It has long been known that professional development programs are essential tools for enhancing teachers' professional capacities. Training programs, workshops, symposiums, conferences, and other professional learning events improve educators' knowledge, instructional methodologies, and professional competences, according to Yadav (2024). Professional development encompasses not only formal training but also peer collaboration, coaching and mentoring, and access to educational materials that facilitate lifelong learning. Teachers are more likely to hone their pedagogical techniques, strengthen classroom management techniques, and enhance assessment processes that promote student learning when they engage in consistent and meaningful professional development.

In educational research, socio-emotional competency among teachers has grown in importance alongside professional development. Teachers' capacity to create encouraging learning environments, make strong bonds with students, and successfully manage classroom dynamics is influenced by their socioemotional skills. According to research, educators who exhibit good socioemotional competence encourage greater levels of student involvement and help schools successfully implement social-emotional learning initiatives (Caires et al., 2023). These skills allow teachers to create inclusive classroom environments, respond to students' emotional needs with sensitivity, and maintain positive interactions that promote learning.

Digital literacy is another important aspect that affects teacher competency. Teachers now need to be digitally competent as educational systems use technology more and more into the teaching and learning process. Critical thinking, awareness of online safety, teamwork, creativity, communication, and information management in digital settings are all included in the broad category of digital literacy. Digital competence has become a crucial professional ability that educators need to acquire in order to use technology for instructional design, communication, and evaluation, according to Basilotta-Gómez-Pablos et al. (2022). Strong digital literacy abilities enable teachers to assist students' digital learning experiences, improve instructional engagement, and incorporate digital resources into their teaching practices.

Teachers who actively participate in professional development, hone their digital literacy, and build socio-emotional competence exhibit higher levels of teaching effectiveness and better classroom practices, according to an expanding corpus of international research. These qualities help instructors advance professionally and improve student learning outcomes. Despite these results, little study has been done on how these elements work together to affect teacher competency in local educational contexts, especially in early childhood education settings. There are still few research examining the combined impact of professional development engagement, digital literacy skills, and socio-emotional skills on early childhood teachers' competency in the Philippine context, and particularly in Gingoog City. Although the relationship between professional development and teacher performance has been thoroughly studied in the past, many of these studies have mostly concentrated on elementary and secondary school teachers. Furthermore, rather than being considered as interrelated elements determining teaching competency, digital literacy and socio-emotional skills are frequently studied independently. The need to look into how these factors interact to affect early childhood educators' abilities is highlighted by this gap in the literature.

Addressing this gap is crucial for both advancing global educational agendas and enhancing instructional strategies. The Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, which supports inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education as well as opportunities for lifelong learning for everyone, is something that this study helps achieve. This study aimed to offer insights that may direct educational institutions, administrators, school heads and teacher training programs in enhancing the professional capacity of early childhood educators by investigating the predicting variables of teacher competence in terms of professional development engagement, digital literacy skills, and socio-emotional skills.

Research Questions

The research sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the participants' assessment of their professional development engagement in terms of:
 - 1.1 training programs;
 - 1.2 mentorship and coaching;

- 1.3 educational resources;
- 1.4 continuous education; and
- 1.5 peer collaboration?
2. What is the participants' assessment of their digital literacy skills in terms of:
 - 2.1 critical thinking;
 - 2.2 online safety skills;
 - 2.3 digital culture;
 - 2.4 collaboration and creativity;
 - 2.5 finding information;
 - 2.6 communication; and
 - 2.7 functional skills?
3. What is the participants' assessment of their socio-emotional skills?
4. What is the participants' level of teaching competence in terms of:
 - 4.1 pedagogical skills;
 - 4.2 classroom management; and
 - 4.3 assessment?
5. Do the participants' level of professional development engagement, digital literacy skills and socio-emotional skills significantly influence their teaching competence?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive–correlational research design and extends it through the use of multiple regression analysis to determine how well selected predictor variables explain variations in early childhood teachers' competencies. The participants were 111 early childhood teachers who met the inclusion criteria and are employed as early childhood educators in public schools of Gingoog City. A total enumeration method was used in this study. Early childhood teachers who were teaching outside Gingoog City were excluded from the study due to its delimitations. Only schools that are geographically, safely, and transit-accessible to the researcher were included in the study or schools located in secure locations that are not in remote or difficult-to-reach locations were included. The study did not include schools that are situated in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas, especially mountainous areas that require a lot of travel, or present safety risks. In this particular context, these delimitations guarantee that the research stays focused on the particular goals of evaluating professional development, digital literacy skills and socio-emotional skills and its direct influence on teaching competencies.

As for the research instruments, the researcher made questions was divided into four main parts: (1) Professional Development Engagement, evaluating engagement in five essential categories: training programs, mentoring and coaching, educational materials, continuous education, and peer collaboration; (2) Digital Literacy Competencies; (3) Social-emotional Skills; and (4) Teacher Skills, which examined instructional abilities, classroom oversight, and assessment techniques. The scoring procedure guided the researcher in interpreting the data on professional development engagement, digital literacy skills, socio-emotional skills engagement, and teachers'

competencies are shown below:

Score	Range	Description	Interpretation
5	4.51 – 5.00	Strongly Agree	Very High
4	3.51- 4.50	Agree	High
3	2.51 – 3.50	Neutral	Moderate
2	1.51 – 2.50	Disagree	Low
1	1.00 – 1.50	Strongly Disagree	Very Low

The scoring procedure for teaching competence are shown below:

Score	Range	Description	Interpretation
5	4.51 – 5.00	Always	Very High
4	3.51- 4.50	Often	High
3	2.51 – 3.50	Sometimes	Moderate
2	1.51 – 2.50	Rarely	Low
1	1.00 – 1.50	Never	Very Low

The research questionnaire underwent content validation by the panel members and experts in the field and after which, some suggestions were made on the number of items, verbs, a table to separate numbers and statements, and the scales of the indicators on the survey questionnaire.

After incorporating these suggestions, the research instruments were tested for reliability using a pilot test on 30 public school teachers in early childhood education, who were not included in the study group and were subjected to reliability testing. Cronbach's alpha was utilized to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. As suggested by Howitt and Cramer (2020), an alpha value of .70 is interpreted as acceptable or "satisfactory". The results revealed that all variables in the study had excellent to outstanding internal consistency reliability. The results showed that Training Programs had an alpha reliability coefficient of 0.873, Educational Resources had an alpha reliability coefficient of 0.895, and Continuous Education had an alpha reliability coefficient of 0.821, which were all strong and acceptable. However, the results revealed that Mentorship and Coaching had an alpha reliability coefficient of 0.930 and Peer Collaboration had an alpha reliability coefficient of 0.940, which were exceptional.

The results revealed that the sub-variables of Digital Literacy Skills, such as Critical Thinking had an alpha reliability coefficient of 0.931, Online Safety Skills had an alpha reliability coefficient of 0.934, Collaboration and Creativity had an alpha reliability coefficient of 0.917, and Functional Skills had an alpha reliability coefficient of 0.931, were outstanding. However, the results revealed that Digital Culture had an alpha reliability coefficient of 0.839, Finding Information had an alpha reliability coefficient of 0.863, and Communication had an alpha reliability coefficient of 0.778, which were good to strong. The results revealed that the sub-variable of Socio-emotional Skills had an exceptional alpha reliability coefficient of 0.979, which comprised 29 items. Additionally, the results revealed that the Teachers' Competence had exceptional reliability, with Pedagogical

Skills, Classroom Management, and Assessment Skills, which signified that the tools used in the study were highly reliable in measuring the constructions. Overall, the Cronbach's alpha values for all variables were between 0.778 and 0.979, which is higher than the minimum acceptable level of 0.70. No items were taken out of any variable, which means that all of them helped make the instrument more reliable. These results confirm that the research instrument possesses strong internal consistency and is therefore reliable for use in the study. Upon successful completion of this trial, where the instrument demonstrated reliability, the researcher proceeded to reproduce the final copy for official launch.

RESULTS

The following are the results of the study.

Table 1

Summary Table of the Participants' Professional Development Engagement

Professional Development Engagement	Mean	Interpretation	SD
Training Programs	4.54	Very Highly Engaged	0.52
Mentorship and Coaching	4.40	Highly Engaged	0.60
Educational Resources	4.28	Highly Engaged	0.65
Continuous Education	4.08	Highly Engaged	0.73
Peer Collaboration	4.49	Highly Engaged	0.54
Overall	4.36	Highly Engaged	0.51

Table 2

Summary Table of the Participants' Digital Literacy Skills

Digital Literacy	Mean	Interpretation	SD
Critical Thinking	4.27	High	0.58
Online Safety Skills	4.46	High	0.62
Digital Culture	4.02	High	0.78
Collaboration and Creativity	3.92	High	0.94
Finding Information	4.17	High	0.74
Communication	4.30	High	0.66
Functional Skills	4.22	High	0.75
Overall	4.17	High	0.61

Table 3
Frequency Distribution and Descriptive Statistics of Socio-Emotional Skills

Range	Description	Interpretation	Frequency	%
4.51 – 5.00	Strongly Agree	Very High	65	58.56
3.51 – 4.50	Agree	High	45	40.54
2.51 – 3.50	Neutral	Moderate	1	0.90
1.51 – 2.50	Disagree	Low	0	0.00
1.00 – 1.50	Strongly Disagree	Very Low	0	0.00
Total			111	100
Mean			4.54	
Interpretation			Very High	
SD			0.45	

Table 4
Summary Table of Participants' Teaching Competence

Teaching Competence	Mean	Interpretation	SD
Pedagogical Skills	4.57	Very High	0.46
Classroom Management	4.59	Very High	0.48
Assessment	4.63	Very High	0.44
Overall	4.60	Very High	0.44

Table 5
Regression Analysis of Professional Development Engagement, Digital Literacy, and Socio-Emotional Skills on Teaching Competence

Predictor	Unstandardized Coefficients		B	95% CI		T	P
	B	SE		Lower	Upper		
Constant	0.80	0.24		0.33	1.26	3.390*	0.001
Professional Development Engagement	0.04	0.06	0.048	-0.09	0.17	0.647	0.519
Digital Literacy	0.04	0.06	0.052	-0.08	0.15	0.661	0.510
Socio-Emotional Skills	0.76	0.07	0.786	0.63	0.90	11.366*	<.001

Model Summary

R = 0.852 R² = 0.726 Adjusted R² = 0.718 F(3,107) = 94.559* p<.001

Note. B = unstandardized beta coefficient, SE = standard error, β = standardized beta coefficient, 95% CI = 95% confidence interval, t = t statistic, p = probability value. *Significant at 0.05 two-tailed alpha level.

$$\text{Model Equation: } T = 0.76S + 0.80$$

Legend: T = Teaching Competence, S = Socio-Emotional Skills

DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the summary of professional development engagement among early childhood teachers across five sub-variables. The overall mean of 4.36 with an SD of 0.51 reflects a highly engaged level of professional development engagement among the participants. The results indicate that Training Programs obtained the highest mean score ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 0.52$) and was interpreted as very highly engaged, suggesting that teachers are most actively involved in formal training activities. This is followed by Peer Collaboration ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.54$), Mentorship and Coaching ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.60$), and Educational Resources ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.65$), all interpreted as highly engaged, indicating strong engagement in collaborative and resource-based professional learning. Continuous Education registered the lowest mean ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.73$), though still within the highly engaged level, suggesting comparatively less but still substantial participation in advanced or ongoing formal studies.

There is a strong professional commitment among early childhood teachers toward ongoing growth and development which shows that they are highly engaged in training programs, peer collaboration, mentorship and coaching, and the use of educational resources that shows teachers' willingness to enhance their competencies, value collaborative learning environments and professional support systems, and demonstrates teachers' initiative in seeking materials and references that enhance classroom effectiveness. However, there may be an institutional support mechanism for sustained academic advancement of teachers to further enhance long-term professional development and elevate the overall quality of early childhood education. Although, certain factors such as time constraints, financial limitations, workload demands, or access to graduate programs may influence their less level of involvement but institutional support can boost their confidence to continue education. According to Guzman and Aguilar (2025), time constraints, financial limitations, and workload are common barriers to teachers' professional development, highlighting the importance of institutional support to sustain teachers' continuing education and professional growth.

Table 2 shows the summary of early childhood teachers' digital literacy skills across seven sub-variables. The overall mean of 4.17 ($SD = 0.61$) confirms a high level of digital literacy among early childhood teachers. Overall, the findings suggest that while teachers demonstrate solid digital capabilities, targeted professional development particularly in collaboration, creativity, and digital culture may further strengthen and balance their digital literacy competencies. The results show that all indicators were interpreted as high, indicating consistently strong digital competence among the participants. Among the domains, Online Safety Skills obtained the highest mean ($M = 4.46$, $SD = 0.62$), followed by Communication ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.66$) and Critical Thinking ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.58$), suggesting that teachers are particularly proficient in safe, responsible, and communicative use of digital technologies. Meanwhile, Functional Skills ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.75$) and Finding Information ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 0.74$) also reflected high competence. Digital Culture ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.78$) and especially Collaboration and Creativity ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.94$) recorded comparatively lower means and higher variability, indicating areas where teachers' skills are less consistent.

These suggest that teachers should taking part in technology-related training, investigating new teaching resources, and consistently incorporating digital materials into their lessons, educators can improve their digital competencies. These findings support the study of Shi et al.(2025) that digital pedagogy help teachers develop the technical and instructional skills needed to effectively incorporate technology into teaching practices.

Table 3 shows the frequency distribution and descriptive statistics of early childhood teachers' socio-emotional skills. The computed mean of 4.54 indicates a Very High level of socio-emotional competence among the participants. The standard deviation of 0.45 suggests very consistent responses, reflecting a strong and uniform demonstration of socio-emotional skills among the teachers. The results reveal that the majority of participants (65 teachers or 58.56%) demonstrated a Very High level of socio-emotional skills, while a substantial proportion (45 teachers or 40.54%) reported a High level. Only one respondent (0.90%) fell under the Moderate category, and none were classified as Low or Very Low. These overall results coincide with the findings of Collie and Perry (2022), who found that teachers who possess good socio-emotional abilities are more engaged in responsive classroom activities and have higher teaching efficacy.

Table 4 the summary of early childhood teachers' teaching competence across three key domains. The overall mean of 4.60 with a standard deviation of 0.44 further confirms an Outstanding level of teaching competence. The relatively low SD values across domains indicate consistent responses and a uniformly high level of competence among the teachers. The results reveal that all areas were interpreted as Very High, indicating a very high level of teaching competence among the participants. Among the domains, Assessment obtained the highest mean ($M = 4.63$, $SD = 0.44$), followed by Classroom Management ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 0.48$) and Pedagogical Skills ($M = 4.57$, $SD = 0.46$).

These findings suggest that teachers demonstrate particularly strong capability in monitoring learner progress, maintaining effective classroom environments, and delivering instruction. Overall, the findings imply that early childhood teachers in the study are highly competent in essential teaching domains. This strong performance reflects their preparedness to deliver quality early childhood education and suggests that existing professional development efforts are effectively supporting their instructional capabilities.

Table 5 shows the multiple regression analysis to determine the influence of Professional Development Engagement, Digital Literacy, and Socio-Emotional Skills on the participants' teaching competence. The model is statistically significant, $F(3, 107) = 94.559$, $p < .001$, $R = 0.852$, $R^2 = 0.726$. Therefore, H_{01} can be rejected. The results of this study indicate that the participants' degree of professional growth, digital literacy abilities, and socio-emotional competencies greatly affect their teaching effectiveness. The results of the statistical analysis reveal that these factors notably influence teaching competence, suggesting that increased engagement in professional development, enhanced digital literacy, and strong socio-emotional skills all contribute positively to teachers' effectiveness in educating students and managing learning settings.

This implies that these factors play an important role in enhancing teachers' overall teaching competence. The combination of professional development engagement, digital literacy and socio-emotional skills significantly influences the teachers' teaching competence. This indicates that 72.6 percent of the variability of Teaching Competence was explained by the predictors. The remaining 27.4% could be explained by additional variables not covered in the study, such as classroom setting, educational background, school support systems, and teaching experience, all of which could have an impact on teaching skills.

When taken singly, Professional Development Engagement ($t = 0.647$, $p = 0.519$, $\beta = 0.048$) indicates that it does not significantly predict competence. Therefore, H_{02} cannot be rejected in this study. This implies that competence may not always increase just by taking part in professional development programs. It is important to investigate factors that may have a greater impact, such as training quality, relevance, personal motivation, or application of learning. The results of this study showed that for early childhood educators, involvement in professional development did not significantly predict teaching effectiveness. This implies that there might not be a direct impact of engaging in professional development programs on teaching skills. This argument can be justified by the fact that the impact of professional development programs on teaching skills might not be based merely on engaging in the programs, but rather on the quality and nature of the programs. For instance, the impact of professional development programs on teaching skills might depend on the quality, nature, and length of the training program, and not merely engaging in the program itself (Jentsch & König, 2022).

Additionally, in terms of digital literacy ($t = 0.661$, $p = 0.510$, $\beta = 0.052$), this shows that it did not significantly predict teaching abilities. Therefore, H_{03} can neither be rejected nor accepted in this particular study. This shows that it is possible that having digital skills may not contribute to the improvement of teaching effectiveness. It is not the mere possession of digital literacy skills by the teacher that can improve teaching effectiveness. It is the teacher's ability to effectively integrate technology into the classroom, into the lesson plan, or into the classroom management and/or the students themselves.

Among the three predictors, Socio-Emotional Skills ($t = 11.366^*$, $p < .001$, $\beta = 0.786$) significantly predicted Teaching Competence. The fourth hypothesis is rejected. Thus, the research indicates that educators' socio-emotional skills significantly influence their teaching effectiveness. This indicates that socio-emotional skills alone have a notable and measurable effect on teachers' competence level. The findings further suggest that educators possessing robust socio-emotional abilities like self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, and interpersonal skills can more effectively oversee classrooms, nurture positive relationships with students, and establish a conducive learning atmosphere. As a result, these abilities contribute to improving teaching proficiency.

Moreover, the results indicate that there is a .76 increase in teaching competency for each point enhancement in teachers' socio-emotional skills. This provides compelling evidence of the importance of socioemotional skills for teaching effectiveness. The rising

demand for 21st-century skills and the expanding diversity in classrooms have underscored the significance of teachers' socio-emotional abilities (Haataja et al., 2022). Effective socioemotional educators excel in handling classroom dynamics and fostering a reliable environment, both of which are crucial for enhancing student motivation and involvement (Machisi, 2023). These findings suggest that promoting positive behavior, nurturing connections, and enabling constructive feedback enhances the effectiveness of teaching through socio-emotional competence. Moreover, it is recommended that educational institutions and schools implement training, workshops, and continuous professional development initiatives to enhance teachers' socioemotional skills. Enhancing these skills will help teachers navigate varied classrooms, build solid connections with learners, and create a safe, inviting, and supportive educational atmosphere that promotes students' involvement, drive, and overall wellbeing.

Moreover, Miranda et al. (2021) observed that incorporating socio-emotional skills into teacher training improves educators' capacity to handle classrooms and promote inclusive, cooperative learning settings. Philip and Tabor (2023) highlighted the importance of building safe and supportive educational environments where socio-emotional competencies can be integrated into teaching styles. Furthermore, Ciucci et al. (2022) showed the importance of teachers with high emotional regulation and empathic capacity to design collaborative learning environments, which enhances student participation. Teachers' teaching styles, assessment techniques, and flexibility to adjust the teaching material based on emotional and social reactions from the students depend on their socio-emotional competence (Oberle and Schonert-Reichl, 2023). This flexibility improves classroom management and pedagogical planning because they recognize the importance of emotional stability in learning preparation, McLean and Connor (2024) also discovered that teachers who are emotionally supportive exhibit better pedagogical planning and more successful classroom management techniques. Together, this research supports the idea that socio-emotional competencies are embedded in the day-to-day operations of teaching and hence have a direct impact on observable teaching competency.

Overall, the results show that socio-emotional skills are the significant predictors of teaching competency, even though professional development participation and digital literacy abilities are still crucial elements of teacher development. Given that these competences immediately improve pedagogical skills, classroom management, assessment procedures, and overall instructional efficacy, this emphasizes the significance of giving socio-emotional development top priority in teacher education and professional training programs which may result in better classroom environments, closer bonds between teachers and students, and higher-quality instruction overall.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the study finds that exceptional socio-emotional qualities, such as emotional control, empathy, equity, inclusion, and constructive relationship-building, are exhibited by early childhood educators. These skills help to provide interesting and encouraging learning environments in the classroom that promote

the learning and wellbeing of the students. The only abilities that were shown to significantly predict teaching competency were socio-emotional ones, even though digital literacy and professional development involvement are crucial components of teacher growth. This suggests that teachers' relationship skills, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal sensitivity are the most important factors in enhancing classroom management, evaluation procedures, and pedagogical efficacy. Consequently, the strongest indicator of instructional effectiveness in early childhood education is socio-emotional skills.

Educators possessing strong socio-emotional skills can better manage classroom dynamics and create a trusting atmosphere, aspects that greatly boost students' motivation and engagement. Additionally, integrating socio-emotional competencies into teacher preparation strengthens teachers' ability to manage classrooms effectively and cultivate inclusive, collaborative learning environments. Moreover, the importance of creating secure, supportive, and emotionally responsive learning environments where socio-emotional skills are integrated into teaching practices. Overall, the findings confirm that socio-emotional competence is the most powerful predictor of instructional effectiveness in early childhood education.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are endorsed:

1. The Division office of Department of Education of Gingoog City may strengthen programs that enhance teachers' socio-emotional competencies, as these were found to be the strongest predictor of teaching competence. This may come in terms of regular workshops, seminars, and reflective sessions focusing on emotional regulation, empathy, stress management, and relationship-building may be institutionalized.
2. School administrators may:
 - 2.1. design structured socio-emotional learning initiatives for teachers, including wellness programs, peer-support groups, and mental health breaks, to sustain teachers' emotional well-being and instructional effectiveness spearheaded by the school principal;
 - 2.2. continue providing relevant, needs-based, and context-responsive training programs to ensure that professional learning is effectively internalized and applied in classroom practice led by the school principal and academic coordinators;
 - 2.3. Targeted digital literacy training programs may be conducted by the school administrator particularly the principal, assistant principal and subject area academic coordinator, particularly in the areas of collaboration and

creativity, digital culture, and innovative technology integration, to improve consistency and mastery across teachers; and

2.4. Professional learning communities and peer collaboration initiatives by school administrators particularly the principal, assistant principal and subject area academic coordinator should be formalized to sustain knowledge sharing, team teaching, and collective instructional improvement.

3. Future researchers may:

3.1. explore other possible predictors of teaching competence and investigate potential mediating or moderating variables, particularly examining how socio-emotional skills may influence the effectiveness of professional development and digital literacy; and

3.2. conduct a longitudinal study to determine the long-term impact of socio-emotional competencies on teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The Lourdes College Research Ethics Committee granted ethical clearance prior to the gathering of data to ensure compliance with accepted ethical norms. After obtaining ethical clearance, the researcher officially requested permission from the Superintendent of the Division of Gingoog City. Upon receiving approval, the researcher forwarded the approval letter from the Superintendent and then gave permission letters to all the school principals of the schools involved in the study. The researcher followed proper procedure in doing so by providing a consent letter to the participant. After obtaining the letter of consent, the questionnaire was provided to the participants during their scheduled school visits. The participants answered the questionnaire in a quiet environment and in a supervised manner to avoid any distraction and ensure accuracy. The participants were assured of confidentiality of information and purpose of the research.

The research study fully adhered to the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173), which ensured the protection of private information of the participants by using proper methods of data collection, processing, and disposal. The researcher was the only individual with access to the securely stored data, and no identifiable personal information was disclosed. The data were properly discarded once the study concluded, and they were kept only as long as needed for reporting and analysis.

The researcher affirmed that there were no financial, professional, or personal interests that would jeopardize the study's integrity. All participants received thorough written and verbal explanations of the study's goals, methods, duration, possible risk and anticipated benefits of the study. Participation was completely optional. The individuals were only involved in the research process after obtaining informed consent. Only the researcher had access to the securely saved responses, which were all handled with the

utmost confidentiality. Data were only kept for as long as was required for reporting and analysis, and they were then properly disposed of.

Only individuals who willingly indicated their desire to join were included in the recruitment process, which was carried out through official collaboration with school principals. There was no financial compensation given. Participants were made aware that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time and skip any question without the need to provide reason. After the study was completed, the results were communicated in a way that encouraged continued dedication to professional development planning while safeguarding personal identities. The entire manuscript also underwent AI detection and plagiarism checking as one of the requirements of the school before the production of the final copy.

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