



INFLUENCE OF GRADUATE EDUCATION ON BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT PRACTICES OF PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

Effective classroom management plays a crucial role in fostering a positive learning environment and ensuring student engagement and academic success. This study explored public school teachers' classroom management practices and their connection with graduate education, focusing on behavior management and the learning environment. A descriptive-correlational research design was utilized, involving forty-two (42) public school teachers selected through total enumeration sampling. Data were gathered using a validated questionnaire and analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The findings indicated that teachers exhibited a high level of classroom management practices in both behavior management (mean = 3.56) and the learning environment (mean = 3.83), with an overall mean of 3.70, interpreted as "Strongly Agree," suggesting strong competence in maintaining discipline and creating supportive learning environments. Additionally, a statistically significant difference was observed in classroom management practices when grouped according to graduate education status ($F = 4.01$, $p = 0.026$). A significant relationship was also identified between graduate education and classroom management practices ($r = -0.41$, $p = 0.007$), although the relationship was moderately negative. The study concludes that graduate education is significantly associated with classroom management practices, although the nature of this relationship warrants careful interpretation and further research. It is recommended that teachers continue pursuing graduate education while applying theoretical knowledge in classroom settings, and that educational institutions consider enhancing professional development programs that integrate theory and practice.

Keywords: *Classroom management, Graduate education, Behavior management, Learning environment, public school teachers*

INTRODUCTION

Classroom management is key to effective teaching and creates a positive learning environment that influences student engagement, behavior, and performance. A well-managed classroom promotes discipline and encourages active participation and learning. The learning environment significantly impacts student outcomes, especially in structured and remote settings (Anselmo 2024). Innovative instructional strategies and materials, such as interactive supplements, enhance student engagement and classroom instruction (Ramilo & Anselmo, 2025). Despite these benefits, managing behavior and maintaining inclusive classrooms remain challenging, particularly in large and diverse settings. Professional development, especially through advanced graduate education, is vital for enhancing teachers' competencies, including lesson planning, behavior management, and instructional decisions. A German study found that master's-level education improves teachers' knowledge and management skills, although application varies, especially early in teaching (Bauersfeld et al., 2025). Emerging tools, such as virtual reality, offer experiential training to strengthen management skills (Li et al., 2024). However, the impact of graduate education on classroom management effectiveness is inconclusive, highlighting the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application in classrooms.

In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) prioritizes teacher quality by promoting continuous professional development and encouraging public school teachers to pursue graduate education. These efforts aim to enhance teaching effectiveness, leadership skills, and classroom management (Torrato et al., 2021). However, despite these initiatives, many public school classrooms face significant challenges in implementing these strategies. Issues such as student behavioral problems, overcrowded classrooms, and diverse learner needs make effective classroom management complex. While most local studies focus on teaching effectiveness and student performance, limited research has examined how graduate education directly influences classroom management. This gap is evident in public schools, where there is insufficient local evidence to determine whether higher graduate education levels improve behavior management and learning environments. Moreover, there is considerable variation among teachers in terms of graduate education and classroom management competencies. While some classrooms are well organized, others struggle with disruptive behaviors and less effective learning conditions (Dube et al., 2023; Espinosa et al., 2024). These disparities underscore the need for more focused and context-specific research within the Philippine educational system.

Despite the growing body of literature on teaching effectiveness and professional development, there remains a significant gap in studies that specifically explore the relationship between graduate education and classroom management practices. Furthermore, few studies have comprehensively examined both behavior management

and learning environment as key dimensions of classroom management. Research focusing on public school teachers at the local level is also limited, leaving a gap in the context-specific evidence that can inform policies and practices. In response to these gaps, this study examines the influence of graduate education on public school teachers' classroom management practices, particularly in terms of behavior management and learning environments. The findings of this study are expected to provide empirical evidence that can guide educational policy, strengthen professional development programs, and support the alignment of advanced teacher education with the practical demands of classroom management in public school settings.

Research Questions

This study aimed to examine public school teachers' classroom management practices and determine whether these practices are influenced by their level of graduate education. Specifically, it focuses on two key dimensions of classroom management: behavior management and learning environment. In addition, this study sought to identify the differences and relationships between graduate education and classroom management practices using appropriate statistical analysis.

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, years of teaching experience, and graduate education?
2. What is the level of classroom management practices of public-school teachers in terms of: behavior management, and learning environment,
3. What is the overall level of classroom management practices of public-school teachers when grouped into behavior management and learning environment?
4. Is there a significant difference in the classroom management practices of public school teachers when grouped according to their graduate education status?
5. Is there a significant relationship between graduate education and public school teachers' classroom management practices?

Integrated Conceptual and Theoretical Mapping

The integrated conceptual and theoretical framework of this study illustrates the relationship between graduate education and public school teachers' classroom management practices. In this framework, graduate education is treated as the independent variable, while classroom management practices, specifically behavior management and learning environment, are treated as the dependent variables. The framework assumes that teachers who pursue higher levels of education acquire advanced knowledge, skills, and strategies that can influence their effectiveness in managing classroom behavior and creating conducive learning environments in the classroom. This study is anchored in the theory of effective classroom management, as discussed by Emmer and Sabornie (2015), which emphasizes the importance of structured rules, consistent discipline, and positive reinforcement in maintaining order in the classroom. This is also supported by Darling-Hammond's (2000) concept of teacher quality, which highlights that teachers' knowledge and professional preparation significantly affect their teaching practices and their students' outcomes. Furthermore, the framework integrates the idea that professional development, including graduate

education, enhances teachers' competencies, as supported by Bauersfeld et al. (2025), who found that advanced education contributes to the development of classroom management skills. The framework also recognizes that while graduate education may be associated with improved teaching practices, its actual impact on classroom management may vary depending on how effectively teachers apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings. This explains the need to examine both the level of classroom management practices and the relationship between graduate education and such practices in the present study. Overall, the framework serves as a guide for understanding how graduate education relates to teachers' ability to manage behaviors and create effective learning environments.

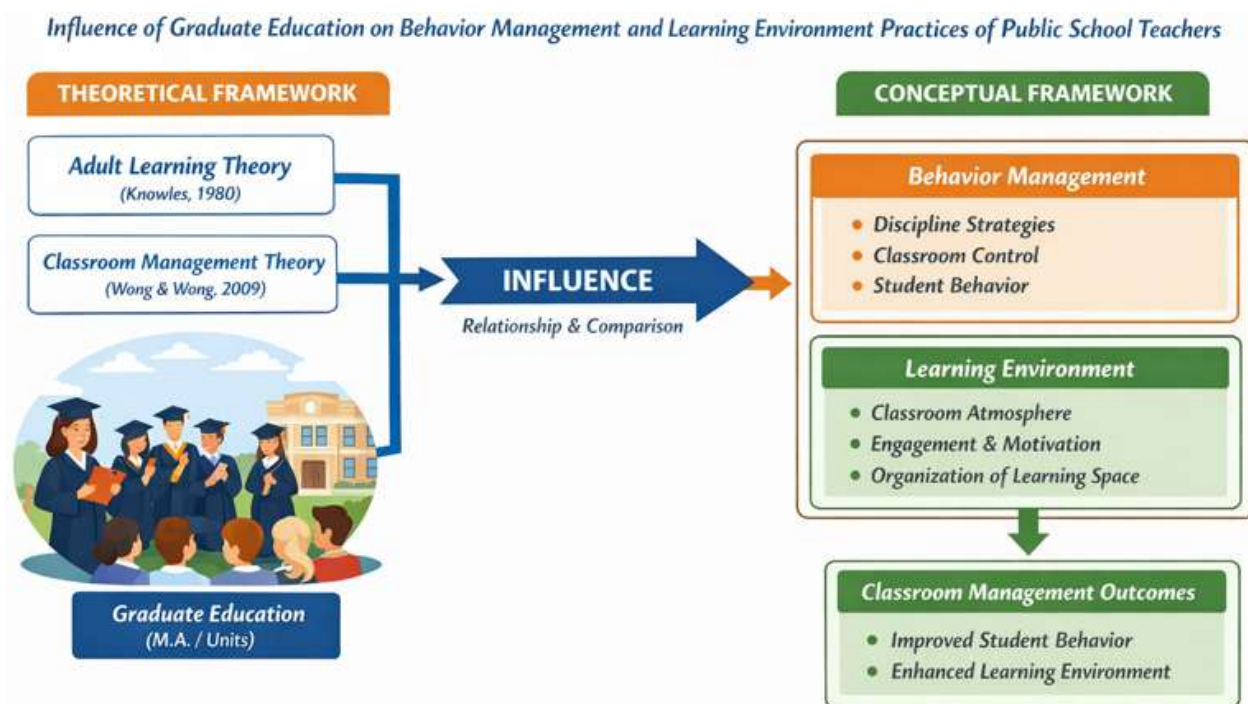


Figure 1. Integrated Conceptual and Theoretical Mapping of the Study

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive correlational research design, a quantitative and non-experimental approach widely utilized in Educational Research, to examine relationships among variables without manipulation. The design was deemed appropriate as the study aimed to describe the level of classroom management practices of public school teachers in terms of behavior management and learning environment, determine differences when respondents were grouped according to their graduate education status, and examine the relationship between graduate education and classroom management practices. Through

this design, the researcher systematically analyzed the patterns and associations among variables using statistical methods.

Research Locale

The study was conducted by a graduate student at Northeastern University. The locale was selected based on the accessibility of respondents and its relevance to the researcher's academic context. The schools included in the study represent typical public school settings where teachers with varying levels of graduate education are actively engaged in classroom instruction and management, making them suitable for investigating the study variables.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study consisted of forty-two (42) public school teachers currently employed in DepEd. These respondents were selected using a total enumeration sampling technique, wherein all available and willing participants who met the inclusion criteria were included in the study. The participants varied in terms of age, sex, years of teaching experience, and graduate education status, including graduate degrees. This sampling approach ensured that the study captured a comprehensive view of classroom management practices across different teacher profiles.

Research Instrument

The primary data-gathering instrument used in this study was a researcher-adapted questionnaire designed to collect data that aligned with the study's objectives. The instrument was developed based on established principles and empirical studies in Educational Psychology, particularly drawing from the works of Emmer and Sabornie (2015) on classroom management practices and Darling-Hammond (2000) on teacher quality and learning environments, which served as the theoretical and empirical foundations of the tool. The questionnaire consisted of two main parts: Part I elicited information regarding the respondents' demographic profile, including age, sex, years of teaching experience, and graduate education status, while Part II assessed classroom management practices across two key dimensions: behavior management and learning environment. The behavior management items focused on aspects such as rule setting, discipline strategies, and handling student behavior, whereas the learning environment items addressed classroom organization, student engagement, and creating a supportive and conducive learning atmosphere. A four-point Likert scale was employed to measure the respondents' level of agreement with each statement, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, to encourage more definitive responses and reduce neutrality. Prior to its administration, the instrument was content validated by experts to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the constructs being measured. Necessary revisions were made based on the feedback. Furthermore, the instrument was subjected to pilot testing, and its internal consistency was established using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to ensure reliability.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data collection process commenced with the submission of a formal request letter to the school authorities seeking permission to conduct this study. Upon approval, the researcher personally distributed the questionnaires to the respondents. The purpose of the study was clearly explained, and the respondents were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Participation was voluntary, and the respondents were given adequate time to complete the questionnaires. After completion, the questionnaires were retrieved, checked for completeness, and prepared for statistical analysis.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The data gathered were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools to address the research questions. Frequencies and percentages were used to describe respondents' demographic profiles. The mean and standard deviation were used to determine the level of classroom management practices in terms of behavior management and learning environment. To determine significant differences in classroom management practices when grouped according to graduate education status, inferential statistics such as t-tests or one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used. Furthermore, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r) was used to examine the relationship between graduate education and classroom management practices. All statistical analyses were conducted at a specified level of significance.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Profile of Respondents

Profile Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	20–29	8	19.05%
	30–39	25	59.52%
	40–49	2	4.76%
	50 and above	7	16.67%
Sex	Male	10	23.81%
	Female	32	76.19%
Years of Teaching Experience	1–5 years	15	35.71%
	6–10 years	12	28.57%
	11–15 years	6	14.29%
	16 years and above	9	21.43%
Graduate Education Status	None	0	0%
	With MA Units	37	88.10%
	MA Graduate	2	4.76%
	With Doctoral Units	3	7.14%
	Doctorate Degree Holder	0	0%
Total Respondents		42	100%

Table 1 presents the demographic profiles of the respondents in terms of age, sex, teaching experience, and graduate education status. The results show that most respondents were aged 30–39 years, indicating that the majority were in their early-to mid-career stage. In terms of sex, the findings revealed that most respondents were female, which reflects the common trend in the teaching profession, where female teachers dominate the workforce. Regarding teaching experience, a large proportion of respondents had 1–5 years of experience, suggesting that many were relatively new to the profession. This may imply that they are still developing and refining their classroom management skills. In terms of graduate education status, most respondents had earned MA units, while only a few had completed graduate degrees or pursued doctoral studies. This indicates that while many teachers are engaged in continuing professional development, relatively few have completed advanced degrees in their fields of study. This finding supports the Department of Education’s emphasis on encouraging teachers to pursue graduate education to enhance their professional competence (Torrato et al., 2021). Overall, the profile of the respondents suggests a workforce composed largely of early career teachers actively pursuing further education, which may influence their classroom-management practices and professional growth.

Table 2. Level of Classroom Management Practices in Terms of Behavior Management

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I establish clear classroom rules and expectations for my students.	3.57	0.50	Strongly Agree
I consistently enforced the classroom rules.	3.52	0.51	Strongly Agree
I apply appropriate disciplinary strategies for misbehavior.	3.55	0.50	Strongly Agree
I effectively manage disruptive student behaviors.	3.50	0.51	Strongly Agree
I use positive reinforcement to encourage good behavior.	3.64	0.48	Strongly Agree
I maintained control of the class during the lesson.	3.55	0.50	Strongly Agree
I handle conflicts among students appropriately.	3.52	0.51	Strongly Agree
I remain calm and composed when addressing misbehavior.	3.60	0.49	Strongly Agree
Total Mean	3.56	0.50	Strongly Agree

The results in Table 2 show a total mean of 3.56, indicating that the respondents strongly agreed on demonstrating effective behavioral management practices. This suggests that teachers should consistently establish clear rules, apply appropriate disciplinary strategies, and maintain control over student behavior in the classroom. Effective

behavior management is essential for promoting an orderly and productive learning environment, as it helps to minimize disruptions and supports student engagement. This finding is supported by Emmer and Sabornie (2015), who emphasized that structured classroom rules and consistent discipline are key components of effective teaching. Similarly, Dacholfany et al. (2024) found that strong behavior management skills, enhanced through professional development, contribute to improved classroom discipline and reduced students' behavioral problems. In addition, Dube et al. (2023) highlighted that teachers' ability to manage student behavior is crucial for maintaining a positive classroom climate and ensuring effective instruction in the classroom. Overall, the results indicate that public school teachers demonstrate high levels of competence in their behavior management practices.

Table 3. Level of Classroom Management Practices in Terms of Learning Environment

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I create a positive and supportive classroom atmosphere.	3.86	0.35	Strongly Agree
I encourage student participation and engagement in the learning process through various activities.	3.95	0.22	Strongly Agree
I organize the classroom to support learning activities.	3.83	0.38	Strongly Agree
I use teaching strategies that promote active learning.	3.83	0.38	Strongly Agree
I ensure that students feel safe and respected in my classroom.	3.86	0.35	Strongly Agree
I manage time effectively during classroom activities.	3.81	0.40	Strongly Agree
I adapt the learning environment to meet students' diverse needs.	3.71	0.46	Strongly Agree
I maintain an organized and conducive learning environment for my students.	3.81	0.40	Strongly Agree
Total Mean	3.83	0.37	Strongly Agree

Table 3 shows the level of classroom management practices in terms of the learning environment (LE). The overall mean of 3.83 indicates that the respondents strongly agreed with maintaining a positive and effective learning environment. All indicators were rated "Strongly Agree," reflecting that teachers consistently promote student engagement, organize the classroom effectively, and create a safe and supportive atmosphere. The highest mean was observed for encouraging student participation, suggesting that teachers actively involve students in classroom activities. Overall, the results imply that teachers demonstrate a very high level of competence in creating conducive learning environments for their students to learn.

Table 4. Classroom Management Practices

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Behavior Management	3.56	0.50	Strongly Agree
Learning Environment	3.83	0.37	Strongly Agree
Overall	3.70	0.44	Strongly Agree

Table 4 summarizes public school teachers' classroom management practices, revealing an overall strong agreement (mean = 3.70) in demonstrating effective classroom management. The learning environment dimension scored higher (mean = 3.83) than behavior management (mean = 3.56), suggesting that teachers excelled at fostering supportive and engaging learning atmospheres. This finding aligns with research emphasizing that positive classroom environments significantly enhance student engagement and academic success. For instance, effective classroom management strategies, including the creation of supportive learning environments, are positively correlated with increased student involvement and motivation (Cambay & Paglinawan, 2024). Such environments not only facilitate behavioral control but also nurture psychological well-being and academic buoyancy, which are critical for learner achievement (Wang et al., 2025). Moreover, teachers' competencies in classroom management are linked to improved student outcomes and reduced behavioral issues, reinforcing the importance of professional development programs tailored to these skills (Dacholfany et al., 2024). Furthermore, supportive teacher-student relationships and effective classroom management practices combine to create optimal conditions for learning engagement, as documented in profiles identifying a high classroom climate associated with strong management techniques (Jiang et al., 2024). Therefore, the high proficiency in the learning environment noted in Table 4 underscores the critical role that teachers play in cultivating educational settings conducive to student success.

Table 5. Difference in Classroom Management Practices According to Graduate Education Status

Source	F-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Graduate Education Status	4.01	0.026	Reject H_0	Significant

The results in Table 5 reveal a statistically significant difference in classroom management practices when respondents are grouped according to their graduate education status ($F = 4.01$, $p = 0.026$). Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that teachers' graduate education level is associated with variations in their classroom-management practices. This suggests that advanced education may contribute to differences in how teachers manage behavior and organize learning environments. This finding is supported by Bauersfeld et al. (2025), who found that higher levels of teacher education enhance professional knowledge and classroom management competencies. Similarly, Darling-Hammond (2000) emphasized that teacher quality, which is often strengthened through advanced education, plays a

significant role in improving teaching practices and student outcomes. Therefore, the results imply that graduate education may influence teachers' development of more effective classroom-management strategies.

Table 6. Correlation Between Graduate Education and Classroom Management Practices

Variables	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Graduate Education & Classroom Management	-0.41	0.007	Significant (Moderate Negative)

The results in Table 6 show a statistically significant relationship between graduate education and classroom management practices ($r = -0.41$, $p = 0.007$). This indicates that graduate education is significantly associated with classroom management; however, the relationship is moderately negative. This suggests that as the level of graduate education increases, classroom management scores tend to decrease. This unexpected result may be influenced by the unequal distribution of respondents across graduate education categories, particularly the small number of respondents with advanced degrees. Despite this, the existing literature generally highlights the positive role of advanced education in enhancing teaching competency. For instance, Bauersfeld et al. (2025) found that higher levels of teacher education improve professional knowledge and classroom management skills. Similarly, Darling-Hammond (2000) emphasized that teacher quality, often strengthened through advanced education, contributes to effective teaching. Therefore, while the present study shows a negative relationship, it should be interpreted with caution, and further research is needed to better understand this association.

Conclusions

The findings of this study reveal that public school teachers demonstrate a high level of classroom management practice in both behavior management and learning environment, indicating strong competence in maintaining discipline and creating supportive learning spaces. Furthermore, the results show that graduate education is significantly associated with classroom management practices, as evidenced by the significant differences and relationships identified in this analysis. However, the observed negative relationship suggests that this association should be interpreted with caution, possibly due to the unequal distribution of respondents across graduate education levels. These findings imply that while graduate education plays an important role in enhancing teachers' professional knowledge and skills, it is necessary to ensure that theoretical learning is effectively translated into practical classroom applications. Therefore, educational institutions and policymakers, particularly within the Department of Education, should consider strengthening professional development programs that integrate advanced academic training and practical classroom management strategies to further support teachers in improving their instructional practices and student outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, public school teachers are recommended to continue pursuing graduate education while actively applying learned theories to actual classroom practices, particularly in behavior management and learning environment. School administrators and the Department of Education may strengthen professional development programs by integrating practical training, workshops, and mentoring that focus on effective classroom management strategies. Additionally, institutions offering graduate programmes should emphasize the application of theoretical knowledge to real classroom situations to ensure relevance and effectiveness. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies with a larger and more balanced sample size, particularly including more respondents with advanced graduate degrees, to further validate the findings and explore the relationship between graduate education and classroom management practices. Moreover, qualitative studies should be conducted to gain deeper insights into how teachers apply graduate-level learning in their daily teaching practices.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

This study adhered to ethical research standards. The respondents' participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. The confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were strictly maintained, and all information gathered was used only for academic research purposes. Respondents were assured that their identities would not be disclosed and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

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