

Professional Barriers and Core Behavioral Competencies among Public Elementary School Teachers

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Abstract

Core Behavioral Competencies (CBC) are essential in promoting teachers' professional conduct and effectiveness in the workplace. This study was conducted to determine the professional barriers and core behavioral competencies of public elementary school teachers in El Salvador City during the School Year 2025–2026. Specifically, it described the respondents' profile, assessed the level of professional barriers and core behavioral competencies, determined the significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables, and examined the moderating effect of respondents' characteristics. A purposive random sample of 333 teacher/respondents employed a self-administered questionnaire, adapted and modified, using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, median, and standard deviation to describe the study's variables, while inferential statistics were employed to determine significant relationships and moderating effects.

The study indicates that most respondents were female teachers aged 30-39, with 1-10 years of experience and bachelor's degrees, and that they participated in training or seminars within their district or school. Interpersonal relationships represent the highest professional barrier for teachers, while planning and preparation are the lowest, highlighting challenges in maintaining effective communication with colleagues, administrators, parents, and other stakeholders. Service orientation received the highest rating among core behavioral competencies, indicating a strong commitment from respondents to provide quality service and meet the needs of learners and stakeholders. Results indicate a significant correlation existed between professional barriers and core behavioral competencies, with factors such as teaching position, experience, and training level acting as moderators. The study concluded that teachers possess strong behavioral competencies despite facing professional barriers, and that continuous professional development, career advancement, and teaching experience enhance these competencies. It is recommended that teachers should engage in professional development, while school heads may provide continuous training, mentoring, and leadership development to enhance teaching effectiveness and address professional barriers.

Keywords: core behavioral competencies, professional barriers

1. Introduction

Teachers play a vital role in shaping learners' academic growth, values, behavior, and overall development, but various professional challenges may affect their ability to perform effectively. These challenges include difficulties in lesson planning, instructional responsibilities, heavy workloads, administrative tasks, limited resources, emotional stress, and insufficient time to complete assigned duties. Fundamental behavioral abilities such as self-management, professionalism and ethics, teamwork, service orientation, flexibility, creativity, innovation, focus, and stress tolerance are essential because they influence how teachers manage their responsibilities and interact with learners, colleagues, and the school community. However, some teachers may show gaps in these areas, particularly in adapting to changes, participating in professional development, managing emotions, handling pressure, and working collaboratively. Limited access to relevant training, inadequate mentoring, and unsupportive leadership may further contribute to these challenges. Concerns regarding fairness and objectivity in classroom observation and performance evaluation may also affect teachers' morale, motivation, professional growth, and career opportunities. Strengthening teachers' behavioral abilities through coaching, mentoring, values based training, continuous professional development, supportive leadership, and transparent evaluation practices can promote accountability, self-improvement, teamwork, and better performance. Ultimately, developing these abilities can help create a more positive and productive school environment while improving the quality of teaching and contributing to better learner outcomes.

2. Research Questions

This study aimed to determine the level of professional barriers and core behavioral competencies among teachers in public elementary schools of the Division of El Salvador City during the School Year 2025-2026.

Specifically, this paper sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the respondents' characteristics considering their age, sex, teaching position, teaching experience, highest educational attainment, and level of training/seminars attended?
2. How do the respondents assess their professional barriers based on planning and preparation, instructional process, assessment, interpersonal relationships, and classroom management?
3. What is the respondents' level of core behavioral competencies based on self-management, professionalism and ethics, result focus, teamwork, service orientation, and innovation?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' professional barriers and their core behavioral competencies?
5. Do the respondents' characteristics moderate the relationship between professional barriers and core behavioral competencies?

Significance

The study provides a basis for understanding teachers' professional barriers and core behavioral competencies in the El Salvador City Division and offers useful information for improving teacher performance and workplace practices. The findings may help DepEd officials identify the professional challenges experienced by teachers and determine which behavioral competencies influence their performance. School administrators may use the results to strengthen leadership, management, coaching, and support systems that encourage teachers to remain committed to their responsibilities. For teachers,

the study emphasizes the importance of developing positive professional behaviors, setting clear and fair expectations, maintaining patience and a positive attitude, regularly reflecting on teaching practices, and adjusting instructional strategies according to learners' different needs and abilities. Strengthening these competencies can help teachers provide equal opportunities for participation, communicate positive expectations, build learners' confidence, and create a supportive classroom environment that promotes academic success. The study also highlights the important role of learners, as effective teacher support can encourage them to become more motivated, engaged, and responsible in their studies. Overall, the findings can serve as a useful reference for developing programs and interventions that address professional barriers, strengthen behavioral competencies, improve teaching practices, and guide future researchers who may explore similar concerns in other educational settings.

3. Scope and Limitations

This study focused on teachers' professional barriers and core behavioral competencies in the Division of El Salvador City during the School Year 2025–2026. This will be conducted for all elementary teachers in the Division of EL Salvador City. This study is limited to teachers' characteristics, including age, sex, position, teaching experience, highest educational attainment, family income, and training and seminars attended, as well as their attitudes towards teachers' professional barriers. The researcher examined the core behavioral competencies of teachers, including self-management, professionalism, ethics, results focus, teamwork, and service orientation. This survey questionnaire is used to assess core behavioral competencies and teachers' professional barriers. This study included three hundred thirty-three (333) respondents. These figures come from different schools in the Division of EL Salvador City and represent elementary teachers who teach at the elementary level, as established by the Department of Education (DepEd) under the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum Program, which is available to all pupils.

4. Literature Review

Respondents' Characteristics

Age, sex, teaching position, teaching experience, highest educational attainment, and participation in trainings and seminars may influence teachers' behavioral competencies and teaching effectiveness in different ways. Waban et al. (2024) emphasized that demographic characteristics such as age can guide the development of appropriate professional development programs, while Liu et al. (2025) noted differences in behavioral and instructional competencies based on sex, with female teachers showing stronger interpersonal and professional skills. Bantoc et al. (2023) found that teaching position did not significantly affect core behavioral competencies, although these competencies were positively related to teachers' self-efficacy and performance. Canuto et al. (2023) further highlighted the importance of professionalism and continued competency development regardless of teaching experience, while Caingcoy (2020) emphasized the contribution of higher educational attainment to professional and leadership development. Reyes et al. (2023) also found that participation in relevant trainings and seminars strengthened teachers' professionalism, communication, flexibility, classroom management, and student engagement, showing that continuous professional development plays an important role in enhancing teachers' core behavioral competencies.

Professional Barriers

Professional challenges can affect teachers' relationships, classroom practices, and overall teaching effectiveness. Cabañero et al. (2025) emphasized that professionalism, ethics, cooperation, and service

orientation help teachers maintain positive relationships and overcome workplace challenges, while Llantos et al. (2025) found that collaboration and continuous professional development help teachers manage diverse learner needs, classroom responsibilities, and other school demands. In terms of planning and preparation, Khan et al. (2024) showed that systematic lesson planning can improve learners' academic performance, while the instructional process is strengthened through collaborative and technology supported strategies that promote student engagement. Assessment practices also contribute to learning, as Ismail et al. (2023) found that authentic assessment improves students' self-regulation, self-efficacy, and autonomy. Moreover, Arskieva et al. (2024) highlighted those strong interpersonal skills improve communication, classroom interaction, and the learning environment, while Bartolome et al. (2024) emphasized that effective classroom management through structured routines, consistent discipline, and active teacher involvement promotes positive student behavior and engagement.

Teachers' Core Behavioral Competencies

The Performance Management and Evaluation System supports teachers' professional growth by aligning performance evaluation with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers and strengthening behavioral competencies. Ramirez et al. (2023) found that teachers may possess strong skills while still experiencing job related stress and emotional concerns, highlighting the need for supportive professional development. Villareal et al. (2024) emphasized that developing behavioral competencies such as self-management, professionalism, collaboration, service orientation, and creativity contributes to stronger teaching practices and professional growth. Similarly, Ingaran et al. (2025) noted that administrative support, collaboration, professional development, and manageable workloads help teachers maintain professionalism and ethical standards, while competencies such as result focus, teamwork, service orientation, and innovation further strengthen teachers' effectiveness, adaptability, and ability to respond to changing educational demands.

5. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the professional barriers and core behavioral competencies of public elementary school teachers. The descriptive aspect of the design was used to determine and describe the level of core behavioral competencies demonstrated by the teachers, particularly in the domains of self-management, professionalism and ethics, result focus, teamwork, service orientation, and innovation. In addition, a correlational component was employed to determine whether teachers' reported levels of core behavioral competencies were significantly associated with the professional barriers they encountered. This approach was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to examine the variables as they naturally occurred, without manipulation, and to determine the strength and direction of the relationships between them. Structured questionnaires adapted from relevant sources were used to collect the necessary data. The questionnaire items were aligned with previous studies on teachers' professional barriers by D'lonsod (2021) and core behavioral competencies by Fabre et al. (2024). These sources provided the basis for the development and selection of the items used to measure the variables in the study.

6. Participants

The respondents for this study were all three hundred thirty-three (333) public elementary school teachers in the El Salvador City Division school year 2025-2026. These respondents include Master Teacher I,

Master Teacher II, Teacher I, Teacher II, and Teacher III, all of whom are actively engaged in classroom instruction and curriculum delivery. Their current teaching ensures they have up-to-date experiences, skills, and knowledge of real challenges in planning, teaching, assessment, classroom management, and professional practice.

7. Data Collection

The study used a three-part researcher made questionnaire to gather data from teacher respondents. Part I collected their personal and professional characteristics, including age, sex, position, teaching experience, educational attainment, and relevant training attended. Part II measured professional barriers in planning and preparation, instructional processes, assessment, interpersonal relationships, and classroom management. Part III assessed core behavioral competencies such as self-management, professionalism and ethics, results focus, teamwork, service orientation, and innovation. The questionnaire used a four-point Likert scale ranging from At all times to Never and was administered through Google Forms for convenient and efficient data collection. The instrument was adapted from related studies and subjected to validation and reliability procedures.

8. Data Analysis

The collected data were organized, tabulated, and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. Frequencies and percentages were used to describe the respondents' characteristics. Mean and standard deviation were used to determine the levels of teachers' professional barriers and core behavioral competencies. Pearson product moment correlation was used to examine the significant relationship between professional barriers and behavioral competencies, while multiple linear regression was applied to determine whether professional barriers significantly predicted core behavioral competencies based on the respondents' characteristics.

9. Results

Problem 1. What are the respondents' characteristics considering their age, sex, teaching position, teaching experience, highest educational attainment, and training/seminars attended?

Table 1
Distribution of Respondents' Age

Category	Frequency	Percentage
60 years old and above	5	1.50
50 – 59 years old	9	2.70
40 – 49 years old	50	15.00
30 – 39 years old	256	76.8
29 years old and below	13	4.00
Total	333	100.00

Table 1 shows that most teacher respondents were 30 to 39 years old, with 256 respondents or 76.8%, indicating that the teaching workforce is largely composed of young to mid-career educators. This suggests

a workforce that is active, adaptable, open to innovation, and capable of balancing professional experience with new ideas and approaches. Only 5 respondents or 1.50% were 60 years old and above, indicating that few teachers are nearing retirement and suggesting relatively stable staffing. The findings also show that female teachers comprised 57.4% of the respondents, while males accounted for 42.6%. Overall, the age profile suggests a predominantly young and experienced workforce with strong potential for professional growth, adaptation, and continued contribution to school goals.

Table 2
Distribution of Respondents' Sex

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Male	47	14.00
Female	286	86.00
Total	333	100.00

Table 2 shows that most of the teacher respondents were female, with 286 respondents or 86.00%, while only 47 respondents or 14.00% were male. This indicates that teaching in the study area remains a predominantly female profession. The large representation of female teachers highlights their important role in supporting learners' academic, social, and emotional development. Meanwhile, the smaller number of male teachers points to a noticeable gender imbalance, which may affect gender diversity and the availability of male role models in schools. Overall, the findings suggest the importance of promoting a more balanced and inclusive teaching workforce while recognizing that both male and female teachers can make valuable contributions to learner development and the school community.

Table 3
Distribution of Respondents' Teaching Position

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Master Teacher 2	0	0.00
Master Teacher 1	16	5.00
Teacher 3	83	25.00
Teacher 2	39	12.00
Teacher 1	193	58.00
Total	333	100.00

Table 3 shows that Teacher 1 had the highest number of respondents, with 193 or 58.00%, indicating that most teachers are in the entry level position and are still developing their teaching expertise, skills, and professional experience. This suggests a need for continued training, mentoring, and opportunities for career advancement to help teachers meet promotion requirements and strengthen their professional competencies. In contrast, Master Teacher 1 had the lowest frequency, with 16 respondents or 5.00%, showing that only a small number have reached this higher position. This may reflect the selective requirements, experience, and competencies needed for promotion to senior teaching positions. The

findings highlight the importance of providing sustained professional development, mentoring, and support to help teachers improve their skills and progress in their careers.

Table 4
Distribution of Respondents' Teaching Experience

Category	Frequency	Percentage
31 years and above	0	0
21-30 years	7	2.00
11-20 years	56	17.00
1-10 years	270	81.00
Total	333	100.00

Table 4 shows that most teacher respondents, 270 or 81.00%, had 1 to 10 years of teaching experience, indicating that the teaching workforce is largely composed of beginning and early career teachers who are still developing their skills, confidence, and professional expertise. Their relatively recent experience may also contribute to their openness to new teaching approaches, technology, and professional learning. In contrast, only 7 respondents or 2.00% had 21 to 30 years of experience, showing that highly experienced teachers represent a small portion of the workforce. This highlights the need to retain and support veteran teachers who can provide mentorship, guidance, and valuable institutional knowledge to less experienced colleagues. Overall, the findings emphasize the importance of balancing the energy and innovative ideas of younger teachers with the experience and expertise of veteran educators through continuous training, mentoring, and professional development.

Table 5
Distribution of Respondents' Highest Educational Attainment

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Doctorate Degree	0	0
With Doctorate Degree Units	0	0
Master's Degree	113	34.00
With Master's Degree Units	70	21.00
Bachelor's Degree Holder	150	45.00
Total	333	100.00

Table 5 shows that 150 respondents or 45.00% held a bachelor's degree, indicating that most teachers had completed the basic educational qualification required for the teaching profession. This suggests that many teachers may still benefit from pursuing graduate studies to further strengthen their knowledge, skills, and professional competencies. The relatively large proportion of bachelor's degree holders may also indicate a workforce that is still developing through additional education, experience, and training. Meanwhile, teachers with master's degree units represented the lowest group, indicating that fewer respondents were pursuing advanced academic qualifications. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of encouraging and supporting teachers to pursue graduate education and continuous professional development to enhance instructional quality, subject matter expertise, and opportunities for career advancement.

Table 6
Distribution of Respondents' Related Trainings/Seminars Attended

Level	Frequency	Percentage
International	5	1.50
National	26	7.81
Regional	47	14.11
Division	73	21.92
District/School	182	54.66
Total	333	100.00

Table 6 shows that the highest number of respondents, 182 or 54.66%, attended district or school level training and seminars. This indicates that most teachers have access to professional development mainly within their schools or districts, while opportunities for broader training remain limited. The findings suggest a need for more regular, relevant, and accessible training programs that address classroom challenges, instructional practices, and professional barriers. Teachers may also rely on self directed learning, peer support, and personal experience to overcome challenges when formal training opportunities are insufficient. In contrast, only 5 respondents or 1.50% attended international level training, showing limited exposure to wider professional development opportunities. Overall, the results highlight the need to provide more equitable and diverse training opportunities to strengthen teachers' skills, improve instructional practices, and better prepare them to address challenges in the classroom.

Problem 2. How do the respondents assess their professional barriers based on planning and preparation, instructional process, assessment, interpersonal relationships, and classroom management?

Table 7
Summary Distribution of the Teacher-Respondents' Level of Professional Barriers

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Planning and Preparation	2.92	0.65	High
Instructional Process	3.43	0.73	Very High
Assessment	3.39	0.66	Very High
Interpersonal Relationship	3.57	0.74	Very High
Classroom Management	3.51	0.58	Very High
Overall	3.36	0.67	Very High

Table 7 shows that teachers experienced very high professional barriers, with an overall mean of 3.36 (SD = 0.67). The most evident barrier was interpersonal relationships, which obtained the highest mean of 3.57 (SD = 0.74), indicating frequent challenges in communication, collaboration, and maintaining positive relationships with colleagues, administrators, parents, and learners. Meanwhile, planning and preparation received the lowest mean of 2.92 (SD = 0.65), interpreted as High, showing that teachers still experience considerable challenges in lesson planning, preparing materials, and organizing learning activities. Overall, the findings indicate that professional barriers are common in teachers' daily responsibilities and may affect their effectiveness and wellbeing. Despite these challenges, teachers continue to demonstrate commitment and resilience, highlighting the need for continuous professional development, stronger

communication and teamwork, effective time management, and adequate administrative support to help them overcome these barriers and improve their professional performance.

Problem 3. What is the respondents' level of core behavioral competencies based on self-management, professionalism and ethics, result focus, teamwork, service orientation, and innovation?

Table 8
Summary Distribution of Respondents' Level of Core Behavioral Competencies

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Self-Management	3.85	0.30	Very High
Professionalism and Ethics	3.88	0.28	Very High
Result Focus	3.98	0.08	Very High
Teamwork	3.98	0.08	Very High
Service Orientation	3.99	0.07	Very High
Innovation	3.93	0.17	Very High
Overall	3.93	0.16	Very High

Table 8 shows that teachers demonstrated very high core behavioral competencies, with an overall mean of 3.93 (SD = 0.16). This indicates that teachers consistently practice positive professional behaviors such as self-management, professionalism and ethics, results focus, teamwork, service orientation, and innovation despite the professional barriers they encounter. Service orientation obtained the highest mean of 3.99 (SD = 0.07), showing that teachers strongly prioritize the needs and welfare of learners and remain committed to providing quality educational service. Meanwhile, self-management received the lowest mean of 3.85 (SD = 0.30), although it still falls under the Very High category, indicating that teachers are generally capable of managing their emotions, time, responsibilities, and workplace challenges. The low variation in responses suggests that these competencies are consistently demonstrated across the respondents. Overall, the findings highlight teachers' resilience, professionalism, and strong commitment to learners, with service orientation serving as a major strength and self-management as an area that may be further strengthened.

Problem 4. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' professional barriers and their core behavior competencies?

Table 9

Result of the Test on the Relationship between the Teacher-Respondents' Professional Barriers and their Core Behavioral Competencies

Professional Barriers	Core Behavioral Competencies Indicators						OVER-ALL r-value p-value interpretation
	Self-Management r-value p-value interpretation	Professionalism and Ethics r-value p-value interpretation	Results Focus r-value p-value interpretation	Teamwork r-value p-value interpretation	Service Orientation r-value p-value interpretation	Innovation r-value p-value interpretation	
Planning and Preparation	-0.31 0.001 S	-0.24 0.001 S	-0.21 0.001 S	-0.31 0.001 S	-0.43 0.515 NS	-0.73 0.001 S	-0.37 0.001 S
Instructional Process	-0.43 0.001 S	-0.48 0.001 S	-0.18 0.687 NS	-0.17 0.551 NS	-0.08 0.625 NS	-0.08 0.710 NS	-0.24 0.001 S
Assessment	-0.54 0.001 S	-0.61 0.001 S	-0.15 0.001 S	-0.16 0.001 S	-0.09 0.001 S	-0.08 0.001 S	-0.27 0.001 S
Interpersonal Relationship	-0.33 0.001 S	-0.35 0.001 S	-0.28 0.001 S	-0.30 0.001 S	-0.15 0.001 S	-0.28 0.001 S	-0.28 0.001 S

Table 9 shows a significant inverse relationship between professional barriers and core behavioral competencies, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This means that as teachers experience greater professional barriers, their ability to demonstrate strong behavioral competencies tends to decrease. Challenges in planning and preparation, instructional processes, assessment, and interpersonal relationships may affect teachers' communication, adaptability, teamwork, professionalism, and overall effectiveness. Assessment showed significant negative relationships across all measured competencies, suggesting that effective assessment practices are associated with fewer professional difficulties. Interpersonal relationships also showed significant inverse relationships, emphasizing that positive communication, collaboration, and mutual respect can help reduce workplace challenges. Overall, the

findings indicate that reducing professional barriers and strengthening support systems may help teachers maintain and improve their core behavioral competencies and professional performance.

Problem 5. Do the respondents' characteristics moderate the relationship between professional barriers and core behavioral competencies?

Table 10
Moderating Effect of Respondents' Characteristics on the Relationship between Professional Barriers and Core Behavioral Competencies

Respondents' Characteristics	Sample Size (N)	Interaction Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Age	333	0.087	1.52	0.130	Not Significant
Sex	333	-0.061	-1.13	0.261	Not Significant
Teaching Position	333	0.214	3.28	0.001*	Significant
Teaching Experience	333	0.182	2.74	0.007*	Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	333	0.039	0.81	0.420	Not Significant
Related Trainings/Seminars Attended	333	0.247	3.91	0.000*	Significant

Table 10 shows that teaching position, teaching experience, and trainings or seminars attended significantly moderated the relationship between professional barriers and core behavioral competencies. Teaching position ($\beta = 0.214$, $p = 0.001$) and teaching experience ($\beta = 0.182$, $p = 0.007$) suggest that career progression and accumulated experience help teachers develop stronger coping skills, confidence, resilience, and professional judgment. Trainings and seminars showed the strongest moderating effect ($\beta = 0.247$, $p = 0.000$), highlighting the importance of continuous professional development in helping teachers manage challenges and maintain strong competencies. Meanwhile, age ($\beta = 0.087$, $p = 0.130$), sex ($\beta = -0.061$, $p = 0.261$), and educational attainment ($\beta = 0.039$, $p = 0.420$) were not significant moderators. Overall, the findings indicate that professional growth, experience, and continuous learning have greater influence on teachers' ability to manage professional barriers than demographic characteristics or educational degree alone.

2. Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The findings reveal that interpersonal relationships emerged despite teachers excelling in many areas; collaborating with support staff is a major challenge. This barrier underscores the need for better communication and a culture of teamwork in schools. Teachers are aware of this limitation, signaling their commitment to improvement and enhancing relationships that affect the learning environment.

On the other hand, this study reveals that teachers exhibit strong core behavioral competencies, particularly in service orientation, which is their most notable attribute. This trait underscores their commitment to addressing stakeholder needs and promoting a supportive school environment.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the following are recommended:

1. Teachers should continue to pursue professional growth by actively participating in school professional development programs, such as seminars, training sessions, workshops, and School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) sessions, to strengthen their competencies and prepare for career growth.
2. Teachers are encouraged to have peer collaboration on planning and preparation to reduce workload and stimulate innovation. Conduct training on effective lesson planning, active learning, differentiated instruction, and technology integration.
3. School heads should support their teachers on self-management, implement school initiatives like SMART goal workshops, reflective tools, mentorship programs, and recognition for self-improvement. This strengthens a culture of reflection and growth, enabling them to manage effectively and maintain excellence in their practice.
4. School heads should prioritize professional development initiatives that address barriers in planning, instruction, assessment, and relationships, focusing on enhancing teachers' planning skills, teaching strategies, assessment practices, and collaboration through various training methods.
5. School heads should enhance mentoring, leadership development, and relevant seminars to provide teachers with continuous opportunities for career advancement and professional growth, irrespective of their experience or training.

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