

Creating a Positive Classroom Environment: Lived Experiences of Grade 1 Teachers

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Abstract:- This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of Grade 1 teachers in the context of creating a positive classroom environment. It aimed to uncover the challenges faced, coping mechanisms employed, and valuable insights gained by Grade 1 teachers in their professional journey. The research employed a qualitative phenomenological approach, utilizing in-depth interviews and focus group discussions as data collection methods. Ten Grade 1 teachers participated in the study, sharing their rich and diverse experiences. Grade 1 teachers' experiences were multifaceted. They highlighted empowering teaching practices, emphasizing relationship-building, adaptability, and resilience. Simultaneously, they faced classroom management hurdles, including short attention spans, behavioral issues, diverse learning styles, and persistent distractions. Coping mechanisms emerged, such as positive reinforcement, differentiated instruction, and structured routines, fostering resilience. Valuable insights underscored the importance of strong student-teacher relationships, emotionally safe spaces, and consistent classroom management. The findings have implications for teacher training, emphasizing the need for comprehensive programs that address not only effective teaching strategies but also emotional well-being. These insights may guide educational policy and practices aimed at creating a positive classroom environment that fosters student engagement and well-being.

Keywords: *Grade 1 Teachers, Classroom Environment, Challenges, Coping Mechanisms, Qualitative Study, Student-Teacher Relationships, Emotional Well-Being, Classroom Management, Educational Policy.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The classroom environment is an essential factor in the academic and socio-emotional development of students. Research has shown that a positive classroom environment promotes student motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes.

Grade 1 teachers play a crucial role in creating a positive classroom environment that supports student learning and well-being. Therefore, understanding the lived experiences of Grade 1 teachers in creating a positive classroom environment was crucial for enhancing teaching practices and student outcomes. The current study aimed to explore the experiences of Grade 1 teachers in creating a

positive classroom environment, which can ultimately lead to the lighting of a fire within students and a love for learning.

The study titled, "Creating a Positive Classroom Environment: Lived Experiences of Grade 1 Teachers" aimed to explore the lived experiences of Grade 1 teachers in creating a positive classroom environment. It had three primary research objectives. The study sought to uncover the challenges experienced by Grade 1 teachers in their efforts to establish a positive classroom environment. Another objective was to understand the coping mechanisms employed by Grade 1 teachers to address these challenges. The study aimed to extract valuable insights from the experiences of Grade 1 teachers in creating a positive classroom environment.

In the local setting, as experienced by the researcher, Grade 1 teachers have the critical responsibility of introducing young students to the academic and social expectations of school. As a result, creating a positive classroom environment is essential to promoting student motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes.

Despite the importance of a positive classroom environment, the experiences of Grade 1 teachers in creating such an environment are underexplored. By examining the lived experiences of Grade 1 teachers, this study sought to address this gap in the literature and provide practical insights for enhancing teaching practices.

The researcher hoped that this study will bring benefits to the Department of Education Officials, that they may benefit from the study by gaining a deeper understanding of the experiences of Grade 1 teachers in creating a positive classroom environment. To the School heads, that they may benefit from the study because the findings of the study may inform the development of professional development programs aimed at enhancing the teaching practices of Grade 1 teachers. To the Grade 1 Teachers, that they may benefit from the study by gaining insights into effective strategies and techniques for creating a positive classroom environment. To the Grade 1 Students, that they may benefit from the study by experiencing a positive classroom environment that supports their academic and socio-emotional development. To the future researchers, that they can benefit from the study by building on its findings to develop new research questions and hypotheses.

In conclusion, the study *Creating a Positive Classroom Environment: Lived Experiences of Grade 1 Teachers* aimed to explore the lived experiences of Grade 1 teachers in fostering a positive classroom environment. Through its three primary research objectives, the study sought to uncover the challenges these teachers face in their efforts. This research underscores the importance of supporting teachers in their mission to create nurturing and effective learning spaces for their students.

II. METHOD

The research design for this study was qualitative research using a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach was particularly useful in exploring the experiences and perceptions of Grade 1 teachers in creating a positive classroom environment. This design allowed for an in-depth exploration of the challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights of Grade 1 teachers in creating a positive classroom environment.

Phenomenology is an appropriate research design for this study because it allowed for an exploration of the subjective experiences and perceptions of Grade 1 teachers. The aim of the study was to understand the challenges faced by Grade 1 teachers in creating a positive classroom environment and how they navigate these challenges through their coping mechanisms and insights. The phenomenological approach allowed for an exploration of these experiences in detail, with a focus on the meanings ascribed to them by Grade 1 teachers.

The research participants for this study were Grade 1 teachers. A total of 10 participants were selected to participate in the study. Purposive sampling was appropriate for this study as it allowed the researcher to select participants who have relevant experience and insights into the challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights of Grade 1 teachers in creating a positive classroom environment. The use of purposive sampling and inclusion criteria ensured that the participants in this study have relevant experience and insights into the research topic. The inclusion criteria also ensured that the participants are representative of the Grade 1 teacher population and have experience in creating a positive classroom environment.

To achieve these objectives, the researcher utilized a qualitative research design grounded in constructivism, which recognized that the reality within the Grade 1 classroom is socially constructed and influenced by interactions. Data was collected through in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) with Grade 1 teachers. The phenomenological approach was chosen to provide an in-depth exploration of the teachers' challenges, coping strategies, and insights.

The research adhered to key philosophical assumptions, including constructivist ontology and qualitative epistemology, acknowledging the subjective and context-dependent nature of knowledge. Ethical considerations, transparency, and reflexivity were

maintained throughout the study to minimize potential biases. Thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns and themes in the data, with a rigorous approach to ensure trustworthiness by enhancing credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

In conclusion, the study *'Creating a Positive Classroom Environment: Lived Experiences of Grade 1 Teachers'* utilized a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach to delve deeply into the experiences and perceptions of Grade 1 teachers. This method proved particularly effective in uncovering the challenges these teachers face, as well as the coping mechanisms and insights they employ in their efforts to create a positive classroom environment.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The researcher delved into the results and discussions of the study, focusing on the lived experiences of Grade 1 teachers in creating a positive classroom environment. The data gathered from the interviews are analyzed to address the research questions.

The first theme explored the multifaceted challenges that Grade 1 teachers encounter in their quest to establish a positive classroom environment. These challenges were organized into two overarching themes: Empowering Teaching Practices and Classroom Management Hurdles. Under Empowering Teaching Practices, subthemes such as Building Relationships and Fostering Inclusivity, Adapting Teaching Strategies, and Maintaining Teacher Resilience and Emotional Well-being. Conversely, the Classroom Management Hurdles theme encompassed subthemes like Struggling with Short Attention Spans, Contending with Behavioral Issues, Grappling with Diverse Learning Styles and Abilities, Combatting Classroom Distractions, and Maintaining Consistent Classroom Management Amidst Variability.

The second theme presents the coping mechanisms that teachers employ to navigate the complexities of classroom management and teaching practices. From behavioral reinforcement to emotional resilience, these strategies serve as both preventive and reactive measures to ensure a conducive learning atmosphere. The themes that were explored included Utilizing Positive Reinforcement, Implementing Reward Systems, Adapting Differentiated Instruction, Establishing Structured Routines, and Fostering Emotional Resilience. These coping mechanisms are not only instrumental for the teachers but also have a significant impact on the students' academic and emotional well-being.

The third theme shifts to the valuable insights gained from the lived experiences of Grade 1 teachers as they strive to create a positive classroom environment. These insights served as reflective takeaways that not only encapsulate the essence of the challenges and coping mechanisms discussed earlier but also offer a deeper understanding of what truly matters in the realm of classroom management and student engagement. Three major themes emerge in this context: the

importance of building strong relationships with students, the necessity of creating an emotionally safe space, and the significance of maintaining consistency in classroom management.

The results of the study indicated that young learners exhibit very extensive sleep habits, particularly in terms of sleep duration and sleep quality, where they score significantly higher. Sleep efficiency also ranks as an extensive habit. Overall, the Grade 3 learners in this study seem to maintain highly favorable sleep habits, which align with previous research highlighting the importance of sleep in child development.

Grade 1 teachers emphasized empowering teaching practices by focusing on building relationships and fostering inclusivity within their classrooms. This involved adapting their teaching strategies to cater diverse learning styles and abilities while also prioritizing their own emotional well-being and resilience. However, they also encountered classroom management hurdles. Maintaining consistent classroom management practices amid such variability proved to be a significant challenge.

In response to these challenges, Grade 1 teachers employed a range of coping mechanisms. Positive reinforcement strategies were found to be effective in motivating and encouraging students, creating a more positive classroom atmosphere. Teachers also adapted their instructional methods through differentiated instruction to meet the diverse needs of their students and establish structured routines to introduce stability and predictability in their classrooms.

The multifaceted experiences of Grade 1 teachers emphasized the need for comprehensive teacher training programs. Educators should receive training that not only equips them with effective teaching strategies but also focuses on building emotional resilience. Furthermore, schools should provide ongoing support and resources to help teachers adapt to the dynamic challenges of the classroom.

The coping mechanisms employed by Grade 1 teachers shed light on the importance of flexibility and adaptability in teaching. Educators should have the freedom to implement positive reinforcement strategies, reward systems, differentiated instruction, and structured routines as needed to create a conducive learning environment. Schools and educational institutions should encourage these innovative approaches and offer training on their effective implementation.

The insights gained from Grade 1 teachers emphasize the significance of nurturing positive relationships in education. Schools should prioritize creating an environment that encourages strong student-teacher bonds, fostering trust and engagement.

IV. CONCLUSION

The recommendation of this study forwarded that the Department of Education Officials may invest in ongoing professional development programs for Grade 1 teachers that encompass effective classroom management strategies and emotional well-being support. School Heads may prioritize creating a school culture that values and supports innovative teaching practices and recognizes the importance of emotional well-being among teachers. Grade 1 Teachers may be encouraged to continue their professional development, staying updated on best practices in classroom management and differentiated instruction. Grade 1 Students may benefit from a positive classroom environment. It is recommended that educators continue to foster emotionally safe spaces where students can thrive academically and socially. Future Researchers may build on this study by exploring similar themes in different educational contexts.

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