



Can I Manage My Own Classrooms? Perceptions of Rural School Novice Teachers

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Abstract: This study aims to describe novice teachers' insights regarding classroom management in rural schools. This Study employed a descriptive method through which the researchers determined a written instrument to be fulfilled. A total of eighty-three teachers with various majors (i.e., Math, Biology, English, Physics, Economy, Art, Religion, Counselling, and Sport) were involved in a survey study. Through an online survey, a questionnaire was sent to the participants via email and *WhatsApp* platform. Collected data were analyzed through a descriptive statistical analysis where means and percentages were used to indicate response estimation. The findings shows that there were eight indicators of rural teachers' classroom managements, including seating arrangement, student teacher relationship, time management, use of writing board, classroom norms, conducive environment, appropriate instructional techniques, and feedback. From all of them, the teachers encountered barriers in terms of feedback, and use of writing board. It is noticed that novice rural school teachers performed positive attitudes on time management, relationship with students, and norms applied in the classroom. This current study implies that there should be an educational policy that leads the teachers to manage their classrooms as effective as they could.

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Introduction

Effective classroom management is an essential ability that all educators, especially inexperienced instructors who are starting their careers, must possess. Rural schools face distinct obstacles and opportunities when it comes to this duty. Effective classroom management is crucial for rural schools due to challenges such as limited resources, multigrade classes, and various student requirements. A major obstacle faced by rural schools is the limited availability of resources. Rural schools sometimes face a shortage of adequate instructional materials, technology, and even basic infrastructure. In order to establish an effective learning environment, inexperienced teachers need to demonstrate creativity and resourcefulness by making use of the available resources (Chai et al., 2023; Robertson, 2023; Y. Zhao et al., 2024). This may entail utilizing community resources, employing local contexts to ensure the relevance of courses, and integrating inexpensive or free materials into their teaching.

Teachers in numerous rural schools frequently manage multigrade classrooms, where students of varying ages and grade levels receive instruction together. Classroom management in this context necessitates an innovative strategy, as educators must accommodate a diverse array of learning capacities and developmental levels (Ginting et al., 2024). Efficient approaches encompass customized education, peer tutoring, and flexible grouping, which can enhance classroom management and cater to the varied requirements of students. Rural communities exhibit a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, cultural



circumstances, and educational requirements (Yang & Zhang, 2024; Y. Zhao et al., 2024). Novice educators must demonstrate cultural responsiveness and exhibit sensitivity towards the diverse cultures of their students. Encouraging robust connections with student and their families can facilitate comprehension of their requirements and foster a nurturing classroom atmosphere. In addition, teachers should be ready to handle challenges such as language hurdles and differing degrees of previous educational experiences (Donkoh et al., 2023; Yang & Zhang, 2024).

Education in rural schools entails distinct obstacles and prospects. Rural schools sometimes encounter challenges such as restricted resources, geographical seclusion, and socio-economic disadvantages (Ateh & Ryan, 2023; Sun & Huang, 2024; Wang, 2023). Nevertheless, they also reap advantages from tightly-knit communities and prospects for pioneering teaching methodologies. This detailed analysis explores the several facets of education in rural schools, encompassing the difficulties, effective approaches, and potential avenues for enhancement. Rural schools frequently experience less funding in comparison to metropolitan schools, resulting in potential repercussions for the quality of educational resources, infrastructure, and extracurricular activities. Limited access to contemporary technology, such as PCs and high-speed internet, can impede the incorporation of digital learning aids (Zhao, 2024). Recruiting competent educators to remote regions might pose challenges due to geographical seclusion and limited facilities. Frequent turnover rates are prevalent, as teachers frequently depart for more effective prospects in urban regions, resulting in instability among the teaching personnel. Significant travel lengths and inadequate transportation infrastructure might pose difficulties for students and educators in commuting to school and accessing educational resources. Teachers in rural settings may have restricted access to professional development programs and educational conferences.

A number of studies (Ateh & Ryan, 2023; Cekaite & Bergnehr, 2023; Decristan et al., 2024; Lazarides et al., 2020; Marder et al., 2023; Stahnke & Blömeke, 2021b; Weyers et al., 2024) has been undertaken in terms of classroom management. However, there is a little focus of the previous studies on rural school context. Notably, it is important to notice that novice teachers from different subject backgrounds are believed to share diverse classroom management techniques. For example, art teachers rely on socio-cultural approach to ensure that rural students can develop knowledge in art and humanities. Yet, science-related subject teachers (e.g., Mathematics) tend to utilize social emotional approach as such subjects concern on particular emotional process.

Interestingly, this current study emerged to describe novice teachers' insights regarding classroom management in rural schools. It is different from those conducted earlier. First, it employed rural school teachers with various majors, such as Math, Biology, English, Physics, Economy, Art, and the like, to participate in the survey study. Second, it utilized a scale which was developed based on rurality context in which teachers were asked to share their experiences and perceptions towards classroom managements.

Research Method

This current study focused on a quantitative approach due which statistical method was primarily internalized when processing data. In this case, a descriptive study was employed since its objective referred to determining average scores for each item of given instrument. This approach was appropriate as the study only used questionnaire as the main tool and it was considered to organize less complex data.



The participants of this study were 83 teachers in several rural schools. They consisted of 51 female and 32 male teachers. Their majors comprised of Math, Biology, English, Physics, Economy, Art, Religion, Counselling, and Sport. Their ages ranged from 25-35, 36-46, 47-57 years old. In this study, the term “novice” referred to teacher’s length of teaching experiences, but it was determined based on age range. Teachers whose age range was 47 up to 57 years old with lower teaching experiences can be categorized into novice level. Meanwhile, prior to participation, they were asked to sign an informed consent, stating that they were able to become a voluntary participant during the survey study. The consents were delivered through email and *Whatsapp* platform to guarantee data privacy.

In this survey study, we employed Teachers' Classroom Management Questionnaire (TCMQ) (Asif, Khurram, & Abdulsattar, 2023) as the main instrument. TCMQ consists of 21 items and 8 dimensions, including Seating Arrangement, Student Teacher Relationship, Time Management, Use of Writing Board, Classroom Norms, Conducive Environment, Appropriate Instructional Techniques, and Feedback. It uses five-points Likert Scale regarding Always (5), Very Often (4), Sometimes (3), Rarely (2), and Never (1).

To begin, we asked one English professor and one expert in Bahasa Indonesia to validate the Indonesian translation for the scale. The scale was reorganized through a proofread. From 97 informed consents submitted to rural school teachers, 14 teachers did not give any response, proving that they were not able to participate in the survey study. The next step was to distribute the scale to every participant through online survey. Google Forms were sent through email and WhatsApp platform. Each participant was allowed to complete the scale for two weeks. Eventually, we received 83 completed scales from the participants. The first step was to insert the survey data into SPSS 25 accurately. Probable missing values were checked to ensure data readiness. As for descriptive statistical analysis, we calculated the data in terms of means and percentages. Each data was categorized based on the scale dimensions, including Seating Arrangement, Student Teacher Relationship, Time Management, Use of Writing Board, Classroom Norms, Conducive Environment, Appropriate Instructional Techniques, and Feedback. Having categorized the data in form of a table, some descriptions were provided to interpret each finding. In addition, mean scores were interpreted using the following intervals or standards, including (a) 4.0-5.0 categorized as “Very High,” (b) 3.0-3.9 categorized as “High,” (c) 2.0-2.9 categorized as “Medium,” (d) 1.0-1.9 categorized as “Low,” and (e) 0.0-0.9 categorized as “Very Low”.

Results and Discussion

The following tables were presented based on scale dimension and it is followed by related interpretation.

Table 1. Descriptive results of Seating Arrangement dimension

Items	Options (%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
I change the seating arrangement of the classroom when needed.	6.5	13.5	6.3	23.1	50.6
I keep the atmosphere alive by proper seating arrangement.	42.5	6.8	35.8	14.9	-
I prefer a U-shaped classroom seating arrangement.	25.6	33	24.2	8.2	9

1 (Never); 2 (Rarely); 3 (Sometimes); 4 (Very Often); 5 (Always)

Table 1 above proves that the teachers performed better strategies regarding seating arrangement in rural schools. They changed the seating arrangement of the classroom when needed (50.6%). It seemed successful for the novice teachers to manage their rural classrooms. However, they did not keep the atmosphere alive by proper seating arrangement



(42.5%). Moreover, their classroom managements were not filled with the preference to U-shaped classroom seating arrangement (33%).

Table 2. Descriptive results of Student Teacher Relationship dimension

Items	Options (%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
I keep a sympathetic attitude in the classroom, resulting in a better learning atmosphere.	12.5	20.5	2.4	46.2	18.4
I keep a caring attitude towards students, which makes classroom management more effective.	28.9	2.8	-	12.1	56.2

1 (Never); 2 (Rarely); 3 (Sometimes); 4 (Very Often); 5 (Always)

In a positive classroom management, student-teacher relationship has to be engaged in every classroom atmosphere. The novice teachers, for example, kept a sympathetic attitude in the classroom, resulting in a better learning atmosphere (46.2%). They also kept a caring attitude towards students, which makes classroom management more effective (56.2%).

Table 3. Descriptive results of Time Management dimension

Items	Options (%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
My punctuality in the classroom results in daily task completion.	35.9	36.1	12	10	6
My time management results in good classroom learning outcomes.	46.5	20.4	3.6	20.5	9
I start and end the class on time, making the teaching-learning process of the class a successful.	33.8	25.3	21.5	12	7.4

1 (Never); 2 (Rarely); 3 (Sometimes); 4 (Very Often); 5 (Always)

As for Table 3, novice teachers faced challenges in terms of time management in rural schools. Their punctuality in the classroom did not result in daily task completion (35.9%). The time management they arranged did not have any positive result in good classroom learning outcomes (46.5%). In this case, they did not start and end the class on time, making the teaching-learning process of the class a successful (33.8%).

Table 4. Descriptive results of Use of Writing Board dimension

Items	Options (%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
I make teaching and management effective with the proper use of the writing board.	-	10.2	22.5	12.6	54.7
I engage the students through the proper use of the writing board.	12.5	-	3.6	49.7	34.2
Proper use of the writing board always keeps students focused on the class lecture.	57.2	12.5	11.5	5.6	13.2

1 (Never); 2 (Rarely); 3 (Sometimes); 4 (Very Often); 5 (Always)

In rural schools, it is noted that technology has not fully used for teaching and learning process. The use of whiteboard led the teachers to manage their classrooms properly. They allowed teaching and management effective with the proper use of the writing board (54.7%). They also engaged the students through the proper use of the writing board (34.2%). Nevertheless, improper utilization of writing board did not lead rural school students to keep their attention to a lesson (57.2%).

Table 5. Descriptive results of Classroom Norms dimension

Items	Options (%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
I make classroom management better by setting practicable norms.	2.8	-	11.6	35.4	50.2
I manage that all students reach class on time.	25.9	5.4	2.2	42.5	24
I set norms that result in classroom discipline.	41.2	33.5	12.5	12.8	-

1 (Never); 2 (Rarely); 3 (Sometimes); 4 (Very Often); 5 (Always)



The above table presents a descriptive analysis on classroom norms needed in classroom management. The rural school teachers constructed classroom management to be positive by setting practicable norms (50.2%). To do this, they managed that all rural school students reached class on time (42.5%). However, a problem appeared when the result was not set as norms for classroom management (41.2%).

Table 6. Descriptive results of Conducive Environment dimension

Items	Options (%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
I keep a reasonable voice pitch for better communication in class.	4.8	13.5	2.9	44.1	34.7
I use exciting strategies to make the learning environment congenial.	46.8	33.5	-	2.4	17.3
I keep in touch with students` problems to establish rapport.	22.5	12.4	42.6	19.1	3.4
I provide a conducive environment for the students.	12.7	18.2	13.5	4.6	51

1 (Never); 2 (Rarely); 3 (Sometimes); 4 (Very Often); 5 (Always)

One of the indicators of successful classroom environment is conducive environment. The rural school teachers seemed to be successful to use a reasonable voice pitch for better communication in class (34.7%). Yet, some of the novice teachers did not use exciting strategies to make the learning environment congenial (46.8%). Some others were doubtful to keep in touch with students` problems to establish rapport (42.6%). Fortunately, more students were offered a conducive environment (51%).

Table 7. Descriptive results of Appropriate Instructional Techniques dimension

Items	Options (%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
During instruction, I float questions for brain-storming.	25.2	33.5	-	36	5.3
I enter the classroom fully equipped with the needed resources.	52	9	24	12	-

1 (Never); 2 (Rarely); 3 (Sometimes); 4 (Very Often); 5 (Always)

Table 7 above provided descriptive statistical analysis for appropriate instructional techniques, which is an important factor for classroom management. Practically, the teachers did not benefit from questions for brain-storming during instructional process (25.2%). Another problem appeared when they classrooms were not provided with technology and online applications (52%).

Table 8. Descriptive results of Feedback dimension

Items	Options (%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
I make students focused in the class through feedback.	19.8	53.6	3.5	12	11.1

1 (Never); 2 (Rarely); 3 (Sometimes); 4 (Very Often); 5 (Always)

Feedback in teaching and learning process is paramount to ensure that teachers accomplish all indicators of classroom management. However, it is noted that not many teachers in rural schools were able to give proper feedback for a lesson. The novice teachers, for example, were not successful to lead the students focus in the class through feedback as a final instruction stage (53.6%).



Figure 1. Summary of the eight classroom management dimensions

The above figure summarizes the main findings of eight dimensions of classroom management in rural schools. It reveals that classroom management aspects consist of both positive and negative practices. As for positive aspect, rural teachers tended to promote positive attitudes towards students with different abilities and competence. This attitude was clearly identified by encouraging classrooms norms or rules that may lead to conducive classroom atmosphere. However, negative attitudes referred to inappropriate teaching techniques, time management, and inappropriate seating management.

The findings reveal novice teachers' insights on classroom management in rural schools. to begin, the placement of seats has a substantial effect on the management of the classroom and the learning of rural students. Proximity to the teacher positively correlates with student engagement and decreases the likelihood of misbehavior. Proximity facilitates more efficient monitoring and prompt intervention in case of any problems. Specific seating configurations reduce disruptive interactions among students who have the potential to distract one another. For instance, implementing the strategy of segregating friends or seating disruptive students beside well-behaved peers might effectively facilitate behavior management (Cekaite & Bergnehr, 2023; Weyers et al., 2024). Configurations such as clusters or tables enhance collaborative work and dialogues, fostering student participation and involvement. This configuration also optimizes collaborative learning and peer assistance. Utilizing traditional rows effectively reduces distractions and enhances individual concentration, particularly during periods of independent work or examinations (Stahnke & Blömeke, 2021b).

Adaptable seating configurations that may be effortlessly rearranged enable a wide range of activities and instructional approaches. The ability to adapt assists in sustaining student engagement and accommodating diverse learning preferences. Efficient seating arrangements facilitate rural novice teachers' mobility throughout the classroom, allowing them to provide individualized assistance and maintain a constant presence throughout the entire room (Gangal & Yilmaz, 2023; Lazarides et al., 2020; van Driel et al., 2023). Strategically organized seating arrangements minimize disruptions, enhancing students' ability to focus and ultimately enhancing their academic achievements. Optimal placement of



seats fosters effective exchanges and cooperation, hence augmenting comprehension and long-term retention of information.

The student-teacher relationship plays a crucial role in ensuring good classroom management. Favourable interactions between students and teachers in rural schools result in many advantages, whilst unfavourable interactions might impede the learning process and disrupt the classroom atmosphere (Adams et al., 2022; Hettinger et al., 2021). Establishing trust and garnering respect from students increases the likelihood of their adherence to classroom rules and active participation in the learning process. The establishment of mutual respect fosters an environment that is favourable for learning and mitigates behavioural problems. Students who cultivate a positive rapport with their teacher tend to exhibit higher levels of motivation when it comes to active class engagement and task completion. They have a sense of appreciation and comprehension, which enhances their eagerness to acquire knowledge. Teachers who establish positive relationships with students effectively control behaviour by implementing proactive strategies instead of relying on reactive disciplinary measures (Chen & Lu, 2022; Cheung et al., 2023). They have the ability to identify and resolve problems at an early stage, so avoiding further complications.

A rural novice teacher who fosters a supportive rapport with students offers them emotional stability, thereby diminishing feelings of anxiety and tension. The establishment of emotional safety is essential for students to concentrate on their studies without being preoccupied by unfavourable encounters. Students are more prone to attaining academic success when they establish a robust rapport with their teacher (Chen & Lu, 2022). They are motivated to inquire, solicit assistance, and effort to enhance their performance. A classroom that exhibits robust student-teacher interactions tends to cultivate a favourable and hospitable ambiance. The students experience a sense of security, appreciation, and enthusiasm for acquiring knowledge, thereby establishing a cooperative and efficient atmosphere for learning. Developing robust student-teacher connections necessitates unwavering dedication, understanding, and proficient interaction (Ateh & Ryan, 2023; Stahnke & Blömeke, 2021a; Sun et al., 2024). Teachers encourage these relationships by demonstrating authentic curiosity in their students' lives, practicing impartiality and uniformity in their engagements, and establishing a nurturing and all-encompassing classroom environment.

Efficient time allocation is essential for achieving effective classroom management. It facilitates the establishment of a well-organized learning setting, optimising the amount of time dedicated to teaching, and improving rural school student achievements. Efficient time management guarantees the optimal utilisation of every minute during the class, minimising unproductive periods and ensuring students remain actively involved in learning activities. Effective time management empowers teachers to integrate many educational approaches and activities, fostering student engagement and attentiveness (Chen & Lu, 2022; Stahnke & Blömeke, 2021a). Properly distributing time for various parts of the class (such as introduction, instruction, practice, review) improves students' concentration and promotes their comprehension and memory of the content. An effectively organised timetable enhances a disciplined and methodical classroom setting, in which students are aware of their responsibilities and are less prone to engaging in disruptive conduct.

Conducive environment to learning in the classroom facilitates successful administration of the classroom by encouraging student participation, pleasant behavior, and attentiveness. It caters to various learning requirements, promotes a feeling of security and inclusion, enhances teacher-student connections, and enables smooth classroom management. Furthermore, it serves as a source of motivation for students, fosters social engagement, and



leads to an effective environment that promotes effective learning. Teachers can accomplish this by strategically arranging the physical environment, implementing explicit procedures, and fostering an inclusive, supportive, and captivating classroom atmosphere (Hettinger et al., 2021; Roshid & Haider, 2024). An orderly and aesthetically pleasing classroom can enhance students' enthusiasm and inquisitiveness, ensuring their active participation in educational efforts. Efficiently organizing and readily accessing classroom resources reduces downtime and interruptions, facilitating seamless transitions between activities. Allocating particular zones for collective tasks fosters cooperation and interpersonal engagement, which are crucial for encouraging teamwork and communication proficiencies (Carrete-Marín et al., 2024; W. Zhao, 2024).

Conclusion

The conclusion drawn from the findings of this study indicates that there are eight indicators of classroom management among rural teachers, including seating arrangement, teacher–student relationships, time management, use of the whiteboard, classroom norms, a conducive learning environment, appropriate teaching techniques, and feedback. Among these indicators, teachers face challenges particularly in providing feedback and in using the whiteboard effectively. The findings also show that novice rural school teachers demonstrate positive attitudes toward time management, relationships with students, and the classroom norms implemented. This study implies that educational policies are needed to guide teachers in managing their classrooms as effectively as possible.

Recommendation

This study has some limitations that lead to proper recommendations for future ideas. To begin, as the study employed smaller numbers of participants, future studies should invite a bigger group that may encourage extensive results. Second, this study was a survey that concerns on determining means or percentages. Such limitation can be enhanced by integrating qualitative approach or mixed-method design, allowing a researcher to explore a variety of perspectives and complex statistical analysis. Further recommendation focuses on the employment of participants from various levels, backgrounds, or interests.

For teachers, this study implies that they have to strengthen preventive classroom management, optimize physical and social classroom organization, integrate positive reinforcement and feedback, and engage in reflective practice. Educational policy makers have to develop context-responsive teacher training programs, reduce structural classroom burdens, provide low-cost instructional and management resources, strengthen school leadership and monitoring systems, and encourage community or parental involvement. Moreover, further researchers should conduct context-specific and longitudinal studies, explore teachers' adaptive and indigenous practices, and employ mixed-methods and classroom-based research designs.

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