

Exploring Healthy Lifestyle Practices Among Basic Education Teachers

A Meta-Synthesis

[1]Clifford M. Inot*, [2]Mary Jane C. Labor, [1]Maria Nancy Q. Cadosales

Affiliations:
[1] Cebu Normal University, Cebu, Philippines
[2] Santiago National High School, Agusan del Norte, Philippines
*Correspondence: cliffzinot@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

A global wellness crisis among educators has intensified due to heavy administrative demands, high workload stress, and tragic systemic outcomes. Addressing this gap, this study investigated the lived experiences of educators by consolidating qualitative evidence on healthy lifestyle practices among basic education teachers. Operating within a strict five-year temporal window from 2021 to 2026, the investigation used Harzing's "Publish or Perish" software to scan Google Scholar, Crossref, and OpenAlex databases, retrieving an initial pool of 2,100 records. These files were methodically filtered using predefined eligibility boundaries, and the remaining literature was subjected to rigorous methodological quality checks using the CASP qualitative tool, which resulted in 8 empirical papers being retained for final evaluation. Applying Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic framework, the study synthesized the data into an overarching conceptual model centered on a *Holistic Ecosystem of Teacher Well-Being*. The structural synthesis revealed three primary thematic clusters: Managing Multidimensional Stress and Mental Well-being; Embracing Wholistic Lifestyle Dynamics; and Valuing Health and Wellness. The analyzed data uncovered an institutional paradox: independent commitments to wellness fail when a school's operational culture forces staff to continuously overexert their physical and mental capacities without structural constraints. Ultimately, this research provides an evidence-informed foundation to guide educational policy, advocating for school wellness initiatives that transition from passive self-care recommendations to mandatory work-life boundaries and structured health-promotion programs.

Keywords
Basic Education Teachers
Healthy Lifestyle
Healthy Lifestyle Practices
Wellbeing
Wellness Program

Article history
Received 5 July 2026
Revised 29 July 2026

JSCD
Journal of Social and Community Development

Vol. 3, No. 02, pp. 112-133

Accepted 15 August 2026

journal.iistr.org/index.php/JSCD
DOI: 10.56741/IISTR.jscd.002481

Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Licensee IISTR, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Common Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA) license.



Introduction

Globally speaking, the school has always played an important role in shaping both education and health, a long-term mission and vision advocated and advanced by the World Health Organization (WHO) through its health-promoting schools' framework. While teachers are central to this mission, their own lifestyle practices have received far less attention than those of their students. International studies revealed that teachers often report only moderate health-promoting behaviors, with physical activity as the weakest dimension [1], and that organizational support strongly influences engagement in healthy lifestyles [2]. Moreover, teachers' wellbeing directly affects their ability to guide students, yet many feel workplace conditions prevent them from fulfilling their role as health models [3]. In fact, the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2024 reported that nearly one in three teachers across participating countries experience high levels of stress, with workload and administrative demands as the most cited causes [4]. Similarly, UNESCO's International Barometer on Education Staff (I-BEST) found that 62% of teachers reported psychological distress, underscoring the global scale of the wellness crisis [5]. These findings highlight that teacher wellness is not only a local concern but a global crisis affecting retention and educational quality.

Locally, in the Philippines, this dilemma emerges. Recent events that have further exposed the human cost of neglecting teacher well-being that affects entirely in the health aspect. In January 2026, Agnes Buenaflor, a 58-year-old teacher at Pedro E. Diaz High School in Muntinlupa, collapsed and later died during a classroom observation. The incident sparked national debate on the stressful evaluation system under DepEd Memorandum No. 89-2025, which ties observations to promotions and bonuses. This tragedy reflects broader national trends. A 2023 survey by the Alliance of Concerned Teachers revealed that 70% of Filipino teachers reported work-related stress and health problems, often linked to excessive workloads, classroom observations, and administrative tasks. These findings emphasized that teacher wellness in the Philippines is not only an individual issue but a systemic challenge requiring urgent policy attention. Beyond these tragic incidents, everyday wellness challenges also persist, teachers' nutrition knowledge and attitudes are correlated, but actual practices lag behind, suggesting a gap between awareness and lived behavior [6]. Teachers are increasingly tasked

with health-related responsibilities—such as supervising feeding programs and addressing mental health concerns—often without adequate training or support, which comes at the expense of their own wellness [7]. Several national and local initiatives, including wellness programs led by principals [8], the Urbani School Health Kit, and provincial efforts in Cebu and Cagayan de Oro [9], show promise but remain fragmented and limited in scope, with little focus on teachers' personal lifestyle practices.

Despite these efforts, research consistently overlooks teachers' lived experiences. Global reviews emphasize leadership and policy [10], while teacher-developed wellness programs often lack conceptual clarity and contain inaccuracies [11]. Existing studies largely focused on isolated aspects of health - such as stress or physical activity - with limited integration of multiple lifestyle dimensions. Furthermore, most interventions were quantitative in nature, leaving a gap in understanding teachers' lived experiences of maintaining healthy lifestyles in real-world educational contexts. There was also a lack of synthesized qualitative evidence exploring how teachers construct meaning around health, what barriers they experience, and how they adapt lifestyle practices within the constraints of teaching work. This meta-synthesis therefore seeks to consolidate qualitative studies on teachers' healthy lifestyle practices, integrating their experiences into a coherent, evidence-informed framework. In doing so, it aims to strengthen school-based wellness initiatives, empower teachers to sustain their own health, and contribute to a conceptual space that remains largely unexplored.

This study seeks to synthesize existing qualitative studies on healthy lifestyle practices among basic education teachers and propose a framework for a school-based wellness program.

Literature Review

This section presents the synthesized review of the different existing literature structured around the researchers' thematic framework, mapping the interactive body of ideas around basic education teachers' well-being. Rather than treating health as an isolated personal choice, contemporary research emphasizes an axiological approach where individual agency, physical health dynamics, and institutional architecture intersect.

A. Teachers' Health and Lifestyle in Educational Contexts

The teachers in basic education are widely recognized as a high-risk occupational group for stress, burnout, and health-related concerns due to heavy workload demands, emotional labor, and classroom management responsibilities. Contemporary literature consistently highlights that teachers' occupational well-being is closely linked to their physical, psychological, and social health, which together shape their lifestyle practices and overall quality of life [12],[13]. Based on the studies tended across global contexts, one of the most highly stressful professions is teaching,

it can both affect mental and physical health outcomes with significant implications. Systematic reviews show that teachers frequently experience chronic stress, emotional exhaustion, and burnout, which are often associated with poor lifestyle behaviors such as insufficient physical activity, inadequate sleep, and poor stress management practices [13],[14]. These findings highlight the importance of examining healthy lifestyle practices as both a preventive and adaptive mechanism for teacher well-being.

B. Conceptualization of Healthy Lifestyle Practices

Healthy lifestyle practices are generally understood as multidimensional behaviors that promote optimal health outcomes. These include physical activity, nutrition, sleep hygiene, stress management, interpersonal relationships, and health responsibility [12],[15]. Within teacher populations, these behaviors are often examined using health promotion frameworks such as Pender's Health Promotion Model, which emphasizes individual behaviors that enhance well-being rather than simply prevent disease. In occupational health research, teacher well-being is conceptualized as a holistic construct encompassing physical, psychological, and social dimensions. Teachers' well-being is defined not only by the absence of illness but also by a sense of fulfillment, resilience, job satisfaction, and positive functioning within the school environment [13]. This broader definition supports the understanding that healthy lifestyle practices are deeply embedded in teachers' lived professional experiences.

C. Occupational Stress, Burnout, and Health Behavior Interrelationship

A large body of literature establishes a strong relationship between occupational stress and unhealthy lifestyle behaviors among teachers. Systematic reviews indicate that teachers experience stress from multiple sources, including workload, classroom discipline issues, limited resources, and administrative pressure [13],[14]. These stressors contribute to psychological burnout and negatively affect teachers' ability to engage in health-promoting behaviors. Research consistently shows that chronic stress reduces teachers' engagement in physical activity, increases emotional eating behaviors, and disrupts sleep quality [15]. In turn, poor lifestyle practices exacerbate stress levels, creating a cyclical relationship between occupational strain and declining health behaviors. This bidirectional relationship highlights the importance of lifestyle interventions targeting stress reduction and health behavior improvement simultaneously.

D. Physical Activity as a Core but Underutilized Health Behavior

Physical activity emerges as one of the most critical yet least practiced components of teachers' healthy lifestyles. Multiple studies report that teachers frequently demonstrate low levels of physical activity due to time constraints, fatigue, and workload demands [15],[16]. This finding is consistent across both in-service and pre-service teacher populations. Intervention-

based studies suggest that physical activity programs, when integrated into school-based or workplace wellness initiatives, can significantly improve mental health outcomes, reduce burnout, and enhance overall well-being [13]. However, sustainability remains a challenge, as teachers often struggle to maintain regular exercise routines without institutional support or structured programs. Furthermore, physical activity is not only a personal health behavior but also a pedagogical influence. Teachers who engage in regular physical activity are more likely to promote active lifestyles among students, reinforcing the broader educational value of teacher wellness [15].

E. Stress Management, Mental Health, and Coping Strategies

Stress management is a central dimension of healthy lifestyle practices among teachers. Evidence from systematic reviews shows that interventions such as mindfulness, cognitive-behavioral therapy, meditation, and yoga-based programs significantly reduce stress and improve psychological well-being [13],[17]. Teachers who engage in structured stress management strategies demonstrate improved emotional regulation, reduced burnout, and enhanced job satisfaction. However, many teachers rely on informal coping mechanisms, such as social support or short-term avoidance strategies, which may not be sufficient to manage chronic occupational stress [12]. Scoping reviews also highlight that well-being interventions for teachers increasingly focus on holistic approaches, integrating emotional, cognitive, and physical components of health. These interventions are often grounded in positive psychology frameworks such as PERMA-H, emphasizing engagement, positive emotions, relationships, meaning, and health [18].

F. Nutrition, Sleep, and Other Lifestyle Dimensions

Although less frequently studied than physical activity and stress, nutrition and sleep are critical components of teachers' healthy lifestyle practices. Evidence suggests that teachers often experience irregular eating patterns due to workload and time constraints, leading to poor dietary habits [15]. Similarly, sleep deprivation is commonly reported among educators, particularly those working beyond official hours or experiencing high levels of occupational stress. These lifestyle disruptions contribute to reduced cognitive performance, emotional instability, and decreased work productivity. Systematic reviews emphasize the need for comprehensive interventions that address multiple lifestyle domains simultaneously rather than focusing on isolated behaviors [12],[15].

G. Health Responsibility, Self-Efficacy, and Health Literacy

Health responsibility refers to teachers' active engagement in maintaining their own health through informed decision-making, preventive care, and health-seeking behaviors. Studies indicate that teachers with higher health literacy and access to health information are more likely

to engage in healthy lifestyle practices [1],[12]. Capacity-building interventions have been shown to improve teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and perceived competence regarding health behaviors, particularly in physical activity and stress management [16]. These findings suggest that institutional support and professional development play a critical role in enhancing teachers' health responsibility. Self-efficacy also emerges as a key determinant of healthy lifestyle adherence. Teachers who believe in their ability to manage stress and maintain healthy habits are more likely to engage in consistent health-promoting behaviors.

H. Workplace Environment and Organizational Influence

Teacher health behaviors are not solely individual choices but are strongly influenced by workplace conditions. Systematic reviews highlight that organizational support, leadership style, workload distribution, and school climate significantly affect teachers' ability to maintain healthy lifestyles [12]. Supportive school environments that promote wellness initiatives, provide time for physical activity, and encourage work-life balance contribute to improved teacher well-being. Conversely, high workload demands and lack of institutional support are associated with poor health behaviors and increased burnout risk [13]. Thus, teacher well-being should be understood as both an individual and organizational responsibility.

I. Synthesis of Literature and Research Gap

The reviewed literature demonstrates that teachers' healthy lifestyle practices are shaped by a complex interaction of personal, occupational, and environmental factors. While teachers generally exhibit moderate awareness of health-promoting behaviors, actual practice remains inconsistent, particularly in domains such as physical activity, sleep, and stress management. Existing studies largely focus on isolated aspects of health (e.g., stress or physical activity), with limited integration of multiple lifestyle dimensions. Furthermore, most interventions are quantitative in nature, leaving a gap in understanding teachers' lived experiences of maintaining healthy lifestyles in real-world educational contexts. There is also a lack of synthesized qualitative evidence exploring how teachers construct meaning around health, what barriers they experience, and how they adapt lifestyle practices within the constraints of teaching work.

J. Relevance to the Present Study

Given the fragmented nature of existing research, a meta-synthesis approach is particularly appropriate for integrating qualitative evidence on teachers' healthy lifestyle practices. By synthesizing findings across multiple studies, this research aims to generate deeper insights into how basic education teachers experience, interpret, and sustain healthy lifestyle behaviors in the context of occupational demands. This study contributed in bridging the gap between health promotion theory and teachers' lived experiences, providing evidence that can inform policy,

school wellness programs, and professional development initiatives aimed at improving teacher well-being.

Methodology

In this part of the research paper, it describes the research design, search result, search strategy, the study's inclusion and exclusion criteria, study selection process, the flow diagram for the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA), quality appraisal of studies using Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) Checklist, data extraction, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

A. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative meta-synthesis research approach to explore and integrate existing qualitative findings on healthy lifestyle practices among basic education teachers. A meta-synthesis is a systematic and interpretive approach used to examine, compare, and synthesize findings from multiple qualitative studies to generate new, higher-order understandings of a phenomenon. Meta-synthesis involves the interpretive integration of qualitative findings in which researchers move beyond merely aggregating results to construct new explanations and conceptual insights derived from existing evidence. Through this process, findings from individual studies are transformed into a more comprehensive understanding that transcends the conclusions of any single investigation (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007).

B. Search Strategy

A systematic search was conducted using the software Publish or Perish version 8 to identify relevant qualitative and mixed-method studies. Multi-source citation analysis helps overcome the limitations of single databases. Thus, three databases were used to gather relevant studies such as Google Scholar, Crossref and Openalex. The search terms focused on studies related to teachers' healthy lifestyle practices. The following keywords like "healthy lifestyle", "healthy lifestyle practices", "wellbeing", "wellness program", "basic education teachers" and "meta-synthesis" were employed to capture a highly comprehensive overview of the existing scholarly work. To ensure the gathered sources are up-to-date, the identified published studies were limited to a five-year publication window spanning between the years 2021 to 2026. This choice is driven by the fact that defining a tight temporal boundary represents a rigorous operational phase in qualitative meta-synthesis, intentionally screening for the currency of findings to isolate contemporary practice implications (Chen, 2024).

C. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The primary studies retrieved through Harzing's Publish or Perish software underwent a rigorous screening process based on clearly defined eligibility boundaries. To be included, studies

must focus explicitly on basic education teachers, including preschool, primary, or secondary educators, and directly address healthy lifestyle practices, health behaviors, or general well-being. Eligible papers are restricted to qualitative designs or mixed-methods research that features distinct, extractable qualitative findings. Furthermore, the literature is limited to empirical studies published in English within peer-reviewed journals or accredited academic repositories. Studies were excluded if they are purely quantitative, lack empirical data, or focus on non-education professionals. To ensure academic integrity, verification, and transparency, any study that lacks a clear sample size, or fails to provide a valid Digital Object Identifier (DOI) and URL, was systematically excluded from the final synthesis.

D. Study Selection Process

The selection of studies for this meta-synthesis followed a systematic screening process guided by the PRISMA 2020 guidelines [19]. Relevant studies were identified through searches of selected electronic databases and academic repositories using keywords such as *"healthy lifestyle," "healthy lifestyle practices," "wellbeing," "wellness program," "basic education teachers,"* and *"meta-synthesis."* Sandelowski and Barroso [20] emphasized that a comprehensive and systematic search strategy is essential in qualitative meta-synthesis to ensure that the evidence adequately represents the phenomenon being studied.

Following the identification stage, the titles and abstracts of retrieved articles were screened for relevance to the study objectives. Eligible full-text articles were then assessed based on the predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. All qualifying studies underwent a rigorous quality assessment using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) qualitative checklist. The checklist evaluated 10 essential criteria covering research design, data collection, ethical considerations, and data analysis; only studies demonstrating robust quality with an appraisal score of 7/10 or higher were retained. Studies that satisfy both these eligibility requirements and demonstrate acceptable methodological quality were included in the final synthesis. Studies that satisfy the eligibility requirements and demonstrate acceptable methodological quality were included in the final synthesis. The entire selection process was documented using a PRISMA flow diagram to ensure transparency and methodological rigor [19].

E. Search Result

The study selection process followed the PRISMA 2020 guidelines to ensure a systematic and transparent identification and screening of relevant literature [19]. A total of 2,100 records were initially identified through multiple sources, including Google Scholar (n = 100), Crossref (n = 1,000), and OpenAlex (n = 1,000).

After the initial retrieval, several records were removed prior to screening due to duplication and other exclusion criteria, including duplicate records (n = 3), it is only 3 duplicates as the

related study and different research papers itself is quite unique in most of the content and titles we have searched and gathered, lack of citation (n = 1,014), missing DOI (n = 68), absence of abstracts (n = 150), unavailable URLs (n = 46), non-English publications (n = 9), missing author information (n = 3), missing journal issue (n = 245), missing volume information (n = 12), missing source details (n = 3), and studies not related to the topic (n = 475).

Following the removal of irrelevant and incomplete records, 72 studies were screened based on their titles and abstracts. Of these, 42 studies were excluded for not being related to lifestyle topics. A total of 30 full-text reports were then sought for retrieval, all of which were successfully accessed (n = 0 not retrieved). These 30 studies were assessed for eligibility, resulting in the exclusion of 17 studies due to being unrelated to teachers and 5 studies due to already meta-synthesized paper. Ultimately, 8 studies met all inclusion criteria and were included in the final meta-synthesis. A PRISMA flow diagram was used to illustrate the selection process.

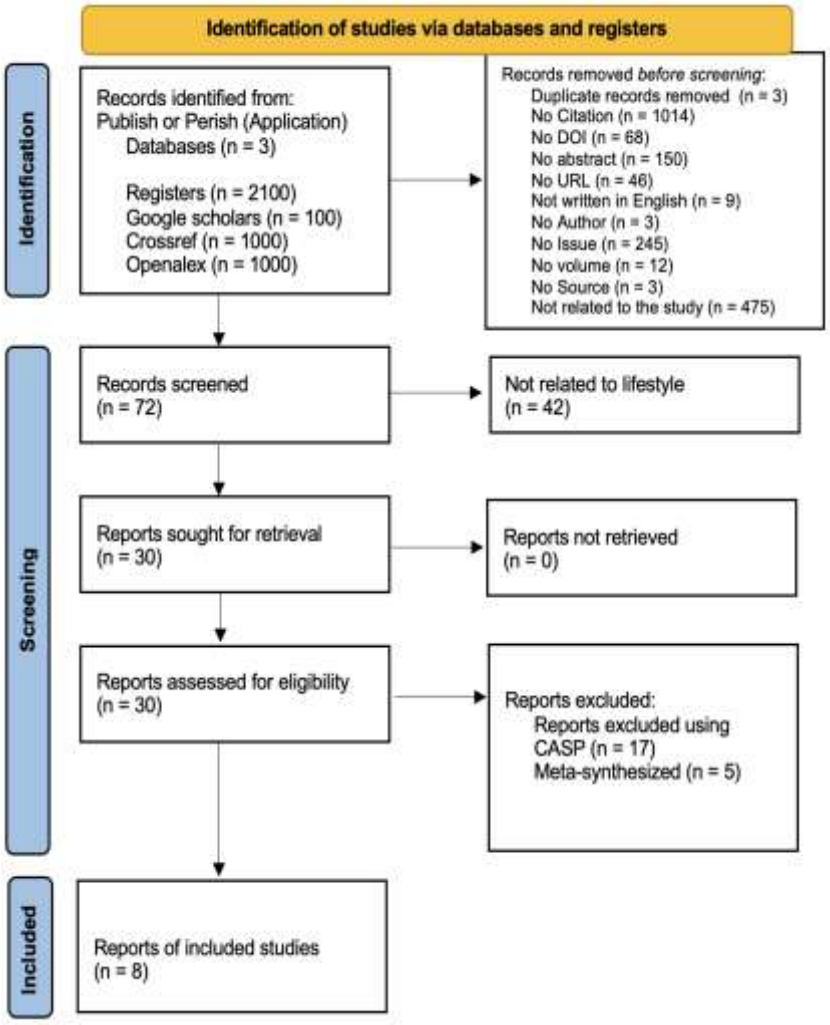


Fig. 1. PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram of the Study Selection Process

P-ISSN 3064-1829 ● E-ISSN 3089-1337

F. Quality Appraisal of Studies

To ensure the rigor, credibility, and trustworthiness of the evidence included in this meta-synthesis, all eligible studies have undergone a systematic quality appraisal using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) Qualitative Checklist. The CASP Qualitative Checklist is a widely recognized tool designed to assess the methodological quality of qualitative research and to determine the extent to which study findings can be considered credible and relevant to the research question. Conducting a quality appraisal is an essential component of qualitative evidence synthesis because it enables researchers to identify methodological strengths and limitations that may influence the interpretation of synthesized findings [20]. The researchers agreed themselves that they have to include certain papers from the different research papers gathered from the databases and the exclusion and inclusion criteria for the meta-synthesis after deciding if they pass the CASP evaluation individually.

Each included study was evaluated against the CASP criteria, which examined several key aspects of qualitative rigor. Specifically, the appraisal process assessed the clarity of the research aims, the appropriateness of the qualitative methodology employed, the rigor of the research design, the suitability of data collection methods, the consideration of ethical issues, the depth and transparency of data analysis, and the clarity and significance of the reported findings. These criteria provided a structured framework for determining whether the studies have been designed and conducted in a manner that produces trustworthy and meaningful evidence.

Consistent with the recommendations of Sandelowski and Barroso [20], the quality appraisal process does not only serve to evaluate methodological soundness but also enhance the transparency and integrity of the synthesis. Studies that demonstrate acceptable methodological quality and sufficiently address the appraisal criteria were retained for inclusion in the final analysis. Through this process, the present study seeks to ensure that the resulting synthesis of healthy lifestyle practices among basic education teachers is grounded in robust and credible qualitative evidence. Only studies meeting acceptable quality standards were included in the final synthesis.

Table 1. Quality Appraisal of Included Studies

No.	Author/s	Title	Publication Type	Design	Healthy Lifestyle Practices	Salient Findings
S1	Hammoudi Halat et al. [21]	Understanding and Fostering Mental Health and Well-Being among University Faculty: A Narrative Review	Review Article	Narrative Review	Mental health, stress/burnout management, and work-life balance.	Academic work demands (teaching, research, mentorship) significantly cause stress and burnout; collaborative efforts between leaders and faculty are

No.	Author/s	Title	Publication Type	Design	Healthy Lifestyle Practices	Salient Findings
						essential for supportive mental health interventions.
S2	Corrente et al. [22]	Mental Health Experiences of Teachers: A Scoping Review	Review Article	Scoping Review	Workplace mental health, stress reduction, and well-being.	Job stress and burnout are disproportionately high in teaching. Personal, family, and work factors drive leaves of absence, highlighting a severe gap in gender-specific return-to-work interventions.
S3	Bourke et al. [16]	Effect of capacity building interventions on classroom teacher and early childhood educator perceived capabilities, knowledge, and attitudes relating to physical activity and fundamental movement skills: a systematic review and meta-analysis	Journal Article	Systematic Review	Physical activity, fundamental movement skills, and healthy eating.	Examined teachers' capabilities, knowledge, and behaviors, revealing that integrating simultaneous health behaviors (like physical activity and healthy eating) boosts perceived capabilities.
S4	Katsarou et al. [23]	A Systematic Review on Teachers' Well-Being in the COVID-19 Era	Review Article	PRISMA-based Systematic Review	Crisis management, psychological resilience, and workplace well-being.	The pandemic exacerbated teacher stress through remote transitions; proactive self-navigated coping mechanisms and administrative wellness strategies are vital to protect educational quality.
S5	Soutter [24]	Transformative Social–Emotional Learning for Teachers: Critical and Holistic Well-Being as a Marker of Success	Journal Article	Qualitative Study	Transformative Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and holistic well-being.	Teachers view transformative SEL—committed to equity, social justice, and emotional wellness—as critical for field longevity and overcoming school-level barriers.

No.	Author/s	Title	Publication Type	Design	Healthy Lifestyle Practices	Salient Findings
S6	Barbarona-Gudelosao, and Escote [25]	Anecdotes of Public School Teachers on Work-Life Balance: A Multiple Case Study	Journal Article	Multiple Case Study	Work-life balancing, socialization, boundaries, and spiritual connection.	Teacher-mothers struggle heavily with dual roles. Successful coping mechanisms involve scheduling, boundary setting, taking breaks, maintaining social support networks, and faith in God.
S7	Egorova and Kuznecova [11]	Conceptual content of the "healthy lifestyle" notion in the programs and activities for the formation of healthy lifestyle, carried out by teachers of preschool education in rural areas	Journal Article	Content Analysis	Physiology, physical activity, sports, hygiene, tempering, and health values.	Identified that rural teachers view a healthy lifestyle strictly through physiological and physical tasks, but lack strong axiological (value-based) understanding, needing better valeological training.
S8	Fergusson [26]	A Strategy for Functional Health and Well-Being in Cambodian University Faculty and Staff	Journal Article	Quasi-experimental Mixed Methods	Transcendental Meditation, mental health, and quality of life.	Documented that practicing Transcendental Meditation yields definitive improvements in teachers' physical, mental, and social health, while significantly lowering anxiety and depression.

G. Data Extraction

Data from the included studies were systematically extracted using a structured extraction matrix to ensure consistency and transparency throughout the review process. The extracted information includes the author(s) and year of publication, country and study setting, research design, participant characteristics, key findings related to healthy lifestyle practices, reported barriers and facilitators, and the authors' interpretations and themes. The use of a structured extraction process facilitates the systematic organization, comparison, and synthesis of qualitative evidence across studies [20],[27].

H. Data Analysis

This study employed thematic analysis within a qualitative meta-synthesis framework following the six-phase approach of Braun and Clarke [28]. This method was appropriate for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning across multiple qualitative studies.

In the first phase, familiarization with the data, all extracted findings from the included studies were repeatedly reviewed to gain an in-depth understanding of the content. This followed by initial coding, where relevant statements and findings related to healthy lifestyle practices among teachers were systematically coded to identify meaningful concepts.

In the third phase, searching for themes, related codes were grouped into potential themes reflecting patterns such as physical activity behaviors, stress and emotional regulation, nutrition and eating habits, work-life balance, and health responsibility. During the fourth phase, reviewing themes, the initial groupings were refined to ensure coherence within themes and clear distinctions between them.

The fifth phase involved defining and naming themes, where final themes were clearly articulated and organized into descriptive and analytical categories. Finally, in the sixth phase, producing the report, the themes were interpreted to generate higher-order insights explaining how teachers construct healthy lifestyle practices, why certain behaviors are difficult to maintain, and what contextual factors influence health behavior adoption across studies. Through this systematic analytic process, the study aims to produce a coherent and interpretive synthesis of healthy lifestyle practices among basic education teachers grounded in Braun and Clarke's [28] framework.

I. Ethical Considerations

Despite the absence of direct contact and interaction with humans or animals, a rigorous ethical academic practice was strictly maintained throughout the research process. First, absolute academic integrity was preserved through the meticulous and proper citation of all original authors using standardized formatting to avoid plagiarism. Second, the synthesis process was guided by an unwavering commitment to data fidelity, ensuring that the empirical findings, context-specific nuances, and thematic conclusions of each included study are accurately represented without distortion or selective reporting [29],[30]. Finally, methodological transparency was strictly enforced by explicitly documenting each analytical phase spanning initial open coding, candidate theme refinement, and final thematic conceptualization thereby ensuring the full auditability and confirmability of the ultimate meta-synthesis outcomes.

Results and Discussion

A. Meta-Theme: Holistic Ecosystem of Teacher Well-Being

Rather than viewing educator wellness as a fragmented series of isolated choices or temporary physical states, this framework conceptualizes well-being as a highly dynamic, interconnected ecosystem. It argues that a basic education teachers' health and longevity are determined by the complex, simultaneous interplay of three distinct core dimensions: internal

psychological management (individual agency), tangible physical and nutritional behaviors (physical health dynamics), and the systemic, environmental environment in which they work (institutional architecture).

B. Managing Multidimensional Stress and Mental Well-being

This theme encompasses the internal psychological, behavioral, and psycho-spiritual coping mechanisms that educators leverage or require to mitigate the heavy occupational demands, chronic stress, and systemic burnout inherent to modern teaching. The findings indicate that protecting an educator's mental well-being requires a careful balance of personal internal management and conscious boundary enforcement.

1. Sustaining Personal, Social, and Spiritual Connectivity.

When internal coping mechanisms are stretched thin, educators rely heavily on external support structures as vital lifelines for active coping and burnout prevention. These external networks include immediate family, professional peer groups, and formal community circles [31]. Bellibaş et al. [29] demonstrate that a strong sense of community and active social support inside an institution drastically lowers teacher anxiety, especially during periods of extreme structural stress. For many educators, this social connectivity is deeply intertwined with their spiritual faith or a belief in God. This spiritual anchor serves as a powerful coping mechanism, giving them the psychological endurance needed to process institutional hardships and maintain perspective when facing workplace adversity [30]. Educators frequently turn to self-navigated cognitive and spiritual coping mechanisms to build emotional resilience and shield themselves from psychological distress, such as anxiety and clinical depression. Hammoudi Halat et al. [21] highlight that structured self-reflection serves as a vital tool for university faculty to process workplace stress and re-anchor their professional purpose. Consequently, school-based wellness frameworks cannot rely solely on clinical or secular mental health toolkits; programs must explicitly allocate space for professional peer support networks and respect diverse spiritual frameworks. This implies that future qualitative research tools must capture psycho-spiritual dimensions as valid active-coping variables rather than treating them as external outliers.

2. Balancing Work-Life Boundary Setting.

Educators must actively manage their daily behaviors to protect their mental health from spilling over into their personal lives. This involves setting strict behavioral boundaries, prioritizing schedules, and taking intentional cognitive breaks to handle demanding dual roles such as those faced by teacher-mothers managing both a classroom and a household [30]. Nielsen and Miraglia [32] note that the ability to psychologically detach from work during off-hours is a primary factor in preventing long-term burnout. However, when an

institutional culture systematically honors these boundaries, educators are much more successful at maintaining this separation, which directly reduces the risk of chronic emotional exhaustion [33]. This underscores a critical need to transition from flexible "wellness suggestions" to rigid, institutionally mandated work-life boundaries. Educational agencies should establish strict guidelines regarding off-hour communications and tasks to protect teachers' personal time, while school leaders must be trained to recognize that enforcing these boundaries ultimately reduces long-term medical absenteeism and operational costs.

C. Embracing Wholistic Lifestyle Dynamics

This theme addresses the physical, physiological, and educational dimensions of a healthy lifestyle. It focuses on how tangible physical behaviors are executed by educators, how health knowledge is structured within institutions, and how teachers conceptually define what it means to be "healthy."

1. Maintaining Physical Activity and Movement Skills.

Core pillars of a healthy lifestyle for both educators and their students includes active living, sports participation, and the development of fundamental movement skills. Bourke et al. [16] demonstrate through a comprehensive meta-analysis that targeted interventions specifically designed to improve physical activity and movement literacy result in significant, lasting improvements in educators' perceived capabilities and teaching confidence. These active lifestyle choices are not merely recreational; they act as vital physiological countermeasures that reduce the physical symptoms of stress, improve overall cardiovascular health, and directly offset the sedentary pressures associated with modern academic administrative work [34].

2. Promoting Nutritional and Healthy Practices.

An individual's level of nutritional literacy and their active choice to maintain a healthy dietary behavior have a direct, positive relationship. Loffreda et al. [34] demonstrate that institutional interventions aimed at building explicit nutritional knowledge are highly successful at helping individuals choose healthier diets and stick to them long-term. This focus on building clear, actionable health literacy is critical; when educators understand the direct link between proper nutrition and long-term metabolic health, they are much better equipped to avoid the chronic physical ailments—such as severe immune system vulnerabilities or systemic fatigue—that often stem from prolonged workplace stress [16],[35]. Historically, health has often been treated as a simple checklist of physical tasks, centered on basic hygiene, illness avoidance, or physical tempering (Prado & Tomedi Martins, 2020). However, modern educational research emphasizes that true wellness requires an axiological approach—meaning health is viewed as a core personal value that integrates

physical, mental, and social well-being into a unified framework [36]. Moving toward this broader definition is essential; when educators view health as a foundational life value rather than a chore, they become far more proactive about maintaining their own well-being [16].

D. Valuing Health and Wellness

This theme moves beyond individual behaviors to look at the broader organizational environment, demonstrating that an educator's lifestyle choices do not exist in a vacuum but are heavily shaped, enabled, or restricted by institutional frameworks, school leadership, and workplace culture. Moving toward a holistic, value-based understanding of personal wellness requires shifting away from treating health as a simple checklist of physical tasks, such as personal hygiene and physical tempering and instead embedding it into the very core of institutional policy and advanced teacher training frameworks. The primary driver of chronic stress and faculty burnout are heavy academic demands, thus collaborative partnerships between leaders and faculty are essential to implement supportive mental health interventions rather than leaving lifestyle stability up to chance or placing the entire wellness burden on the individual. Educators are pushed into a destructive cycle of over-performance when institutions fail to take structural steps to reduce excessive workloads and establish safe and sustainable operational boundaries, this then heavily impairs their perceived work ability and leads to severe physical exhaustion and localized strain. This dynamic creates a severe paradox wherein an individual's personal commitment to a healthy lifestyle becomes impossible to sustain due to constant, unmitigated organizational demands, therefore, a true institutional commitment to wellness cannot survive unless school leadership steps in to structurally protect an educator's work capacity by enforcing safe, realistic limits on occupational outputs.

1. Cultivating Deliberate "Wellness Cultures.

Academic institutions and their leaders must move past simply telling individuals to take care of themselves and instead focus on co-creating environments that structurally support health. Collaborative efforts between leaders and faculty are essential for supportive mental health interventions, proving that structural, organizational interventions are far more effective at reducing workplace distress and boosting morale than individual-focused resilience programs. To truly safeguard teachers from systemic burnout, school leaders must build supportive workplace cultures that actively mitigate psychological distress, encourage professional collaboration, and offer clear institutional backing. Cultivating these deliberate "wellness cultures" within educational institutions acts as a primary defense that directly improves overall workplace mental health.

The critical reason institutions must proactively build these wellness cultures is to counteract major environmental barriers, such as the dangerous practice of employees

overexerting their work ability without strict structural limits. When institutions fail to set clear boundaries on workloads, heavy academic demands push employees into a cycle of over-performance that quickly leads to severe physical exhaustion, localized strain, and total burnout. This creates a striking paradox: an individual may be highly committed to personal healthy lifestyle practices, but those habits become impossible to sustain when a school's culture demands constant, unsustainable output and heavily impairs their perceived work ability. Ultimately, individual wellness efforts continue to fail unless leadership steps in to build a deliberate wellness culture that takes structural steps to reduce excessive workloads and establishes safe, sustainable limits on occupational demands.

2. Adopting Resilient Health Practices During Crises.

External shocks such as global pandemics and the sudden, chaotic transition to remote or hybrid learning models—can instantly disrupt an educator's lifestyle stability and professional confidence. These emergency transitions frequently trigger extreme operational friction and intense psychological anxiety due to gaps in institutional readiness [30]. When these macro-level shocks hit, the responsibility falls squarely on leadership to deploy highly adaptive governance, flexible policies, and transparent communication [37]. Bellibaş et al. [29] reinforce this by showing that leaders who actively adapt their strategies to protect their staff's emotional safety during a crisis are much more successful at preserving long-term educational quality and operational continuity. External shocks, such as global pandemics and the sudden, chaotic transition to remote or hybrid learning models can instantly disrupt an educator's lifestyle stability and professional confidence. The pandemic era significantly exacerbated teacher stress through rapid, unmapped transitions to remote instruction, which frequently triggered extreme operational friction and intense psychological anxiety due to deep gaps in institutional readiness. When these macro-level shocks hit, relying solely on proactive, self-navigated personal coping mechanisms is insufficient to maintain well-being; instead, individual adaptive behaviors must be structurally reinforced by administrative wellness strategies to successfully preserve educational quality and staff equilibrium. Consequently, the responsibility falls squarely on school leadership to deploy highly adaptive governance, flexible policies, and transparent communication channels during organizational crises. School leadership dynamics play a crucial role during times of systemic shock, as leaders who actively adapt their management strategies to protect their staff's emotional safety and address their anxieties are far more successful at buffering teacher vulnerabilities, maintaining environmental stability, and preserving long-term operational continuity. Ultimately, building true crisis resilience requires a dual commitment where educators adopt active coping

behaviors and leadership dynamically shapes the workspace to shield them from environmental instability.

3. Participating in Capacity-Building Interventions.

A highly effective way for institutions to improve their workforce's long-term health metrics is investing in structured capacity-building programs. Rather than assuming educators naturally absorbed wellness practices, the data proves that explicitly teaching health-promotion frameworks yields dramatic improvements in professional self-efficacy and objective knowledge [16]. Institutional resilience is maximized when these training programs address multiple wellness habits at once such as pairing physical activity frameworks with nutritional literacy [34]. Providing this structured training systematically boosts an educator's confidence and gives them the concrete tools they need to successfully manage their personal wellness [38].

The framework shown in Fig. 2 demonstrates important constructs that describe the holistic ecosystem of teachers' well-being. The first core insight of this study demonstrates that managing multidimensional stress relies heavily on an educator's capacity for internal reflection, psychological detachment, and intentional boundary setting [32]. However, when these internal coping mechanisms are stretched thin, teachers must depend on vital external lifelines specifically close-knit professional peer networks, family support, and psycho-spiritual frameworks to maintain psychological endurance and prevent systemic burnout [29]-[31]. Second, the synthesis establishes that adopting holistic lifestyle dynamics, such as physical activity and targeted nutritional literacy, goes far beyond simple biological maintenance [34],[35]. When educators shift from viewing health as a mere checklist of physical tasks to embracing it as a core personal and professional value, they experience documented improvements in professional self-efficacy, stress reduction, and teaching confidence [16],[36],[39].

The final and most transformative finding of this study emphasizes that individual wellness choices are ultimately governed, enabled, or restricted by the broader organizational environment [21]. This reveals a striking paradox: an educator can have high health literacy and a deep commitment to personal wellness, but these habits become impossible to sustain when an unmitigated institutional culture demands constant, excessive output [32],[33]. If an institution allows its employees to overexert their work capacity without structural boundaries, their individual wellness efforts are bound to fail.

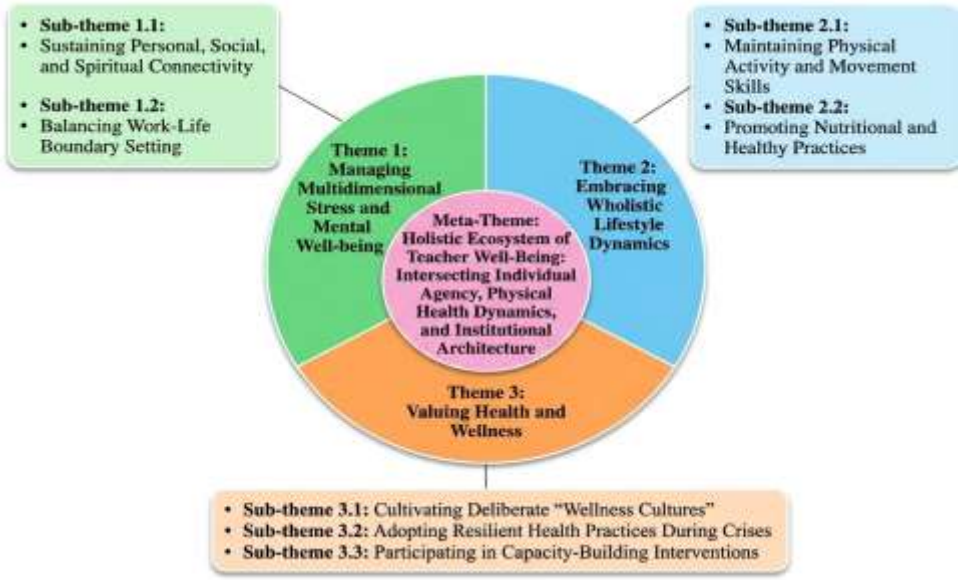


Fig. 2. Thematic Framework on the Holistic Ecosystem of Teacher Well-Being

The basic education teachers' wellness cannot be achieved through passive wellness suggestions or standalone resilience training. Long-term field longevity and educational quality require academic institutions and school leaders to co-create deliberate, structurally backed wellness cultures [21],[31]. These demands moving from individualization of burnout to implementing structural interventions, such as institutionally mandated work-life boundaries, capacity-building interventions that pair movement and nutritional literacy, and highly adaptive governance capable of protecting staff equilibrium during macro-level crises [29],[37],[38]. True resilience in basic education ultimately relies on a dual commitment wherein educators adopt active coping behaviors within a workspace dynamically engineered by leadership to protect their physical and emotional capacity.

Conclusion

The meta-synthesis of the literature reveals that healthy lifestyle practices among basic education teachers do not exist in a vacuum, rather, they operate within a highly interactive ecosystem where individual agency, physical behaviors, and institutional architecture intersect. Grounded in the findings, the following actionable recommendations are proposed across practice, policy, and future research to bridge the gap between individual wellness awareness and institutional accountability. First, schools may replace isolated health lectures with comprehensive, multi-domain training programs that combine physical movement with nutritional literacy to build long-term metabolic health. Second, administrators may formalize peer-support networks and professional learning communities, providing dedicated on-campus spaces for teachers to process stress and strengthen social connectivity.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

[1] M. Örs, "Healthy lifestyle behaviors among teachers working in public primary schools and affecting factors," *Frontiers in Public Health*, vol. 2, pp. 2–15, 2024, doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2024.1382385.

[2] D. Luh, H. Huang, S. Chiou, K. Lo, and F. Chen, "The association between organizational factors of health promoting schools and teachers' health lifestyles: A multilevel analysis," *Journal of School Health*, vol. 95, no. 2, pp. 126–133, 2024, doi: 10.1111/josh.13523.

[3] R. Wilf-Miron, R. Kittany, M. Saban, and I. Kagan, "Teachers' characteristics predict students' guidance for a healthy lifestyle: A cross-sectional study in Arab-speaking schools," *BMC Public Health*, vol. 22, no. 1, Art. no. 1420, 2022, doi: 10.1186/s12889-022-13795-5.

[4] OECD, *Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2024 Framework*. Paris, France: OECD Publishing, 2024.

[5] UNESCO, *International Barometer on Education Staff (I-BEST) Report*. Paris, France: UNESCO, 2023.

[6] R. J. M. Ortega and R. A. Ortega-Dela Cruz, "Nutrition knowledge, attitude, and health practices among public school teachers in the Philippines," *Pan-African Journal of Health and Environmental Science*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 1–10, 2025, doi: 10.56893/ajhes2025v04i01.01.

[7] G. Lasco, V. G. Yu, C. C. David, and I. S. Baysic, "Teachers as health workers in the Philippines," *Acta Medica Philippina*, vol. 58, no. 18, pp. 7–19, 2023, doi: 10.47895/amp.vi0.8146.

[8] E. Ortillo and I. Ancho, *Design of Teachers' Wellness Program: The Experience of Filipino School Principals*, 2021. [Online]. Available: https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1309081

[9] D. D. Daliva and A. M. Valle, "Healthy lifestyle and well-being of teachers," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Analysis*, vol. 9, no. 4, pp. 1583–1595, 2026, doi: 10.47191/ijmra/v9-i4-20.

[10] F. Karaferye and M. Ş. Bellibaş, "Key school leadership practices to enhance teacher wellbeing: A meta-synthesis of qualitative evidence," *Research Papers in Education*, vol. 40, no. 5, pp. 684–716, 2025, doi: 10.1080/02671522.2025.2475496.

[11] M. A. Egorova and O. A. Kuznecova, "Teachers' ideas about healthy lifestyle in the context of health-saving education," *Perspektivy Nauki i Obrazovania*, vol. 43, no. 1, pp. 34–47, 2020, doi: 10.32744/pse.2020.1.3.

[12] J. C. Nwoko *et al*., *Systematic Review on Teachers' Occupational Wellbeing*, 2023.

[13] N. R. Paudel *et al*., *Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis on Stress Management Interventions for Teachers*, 2022.

[14] B. von Haaren-Mack *et al*., *Systematic Review of Stress in Teachers*, 2019.

[15] L. Corbett *et al*., *Scoping Review on Lifestyle Interventions for Teachers' Well-Being*, 2022.

[16] M. Bourke, A. Haddara, A. Loh, K. A. Saravanamuttoo, B. A. Bruijns, and P. Tucker, "Effect of capacity building interventions on classroom teacher and early childhood educator perceived capabilities, knowledge, and attitudes relating to physical activity and fundamental movement skills: A systematic review and meta-analysis," *BMC Public Health*, vol. 24, Art. no. 18907, 2024, doi: 10.1186/s12889-024-18907-x.

[17] S.-J. Hepburn *et al*., *Stress Management and Wellbeing Intervention Model for Teachers*, 2021.

[18] P. Avola, T. Soini-Ikonen, A. Jyrkiäinen, and V. Pentikäinen, "Interventions to teacher well-being and burnout: A scoping review," *Educational Psychology Review*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2025, doi: 10.1007/s10648-025-09986-2.

[19] M. J. Page *et al*., "The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews," *BMJ*, vol. 372, Art. no. n71, 2021, doi: 10.1136/bmj.n71.

[20] M. Sandelowski and J. Barroso, *Handbook for Synthesizing Qualitative Research*. New York, NY, USA: Springer Publishing Company, 2007.

[21] D. Hammoudi Halat, A. Soltani, R. Dalli, L. Alsarraj, and A. Malki, "Understanding and fostering mental health and well-being among university faculty: A narrative review," *Journal of Clinical Medicine*, vol. 12, no. 13, Art. no. 4425, 2023, doi: 10.3390/jcm12134425.

[22] M. Corrente, K. Ferguson, and I. Bourgeault, "Mental health experiences of teachers: A scoping review," *Journal of Teaching and Learning*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 23–43, 2022, doi: 10.22329/jtl.v16i1.6856.

[23] E. Katsarou, P. Chatzipanagiotou, and A.-M. Sougari, "A systematic review on teachers' well-being in the COVID-19 era," *Education Sciences*, vol. 13, no. 9, Art. no. 927, 2023.
[24] M. Soutter, "Social-emotional learning for teachers," *Journal of Teaching and Learning*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 7–30, 2023.
[25] D. Barbarona-Gudelosao and M. J. Escote, "Anecdotes of public school teachers on work-life balance: A multiple case study," *Zenodo*, 2025, doi: 10.5281/zenodo.16525545.
[26] L. F. Fergusson, "A strategy for functional health and well-being in Cambodian university faculty and staff," *Warmadewa Medical Journal*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 30–47, 2020, doi: 10.22225/wmj.5.1.1795.30-47.
[27] J. Thomas and A. Harden, "Methods for the thematic synthesis of qualitative research in systematic reviews," *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, vol. 8, Art. no. 45, 2008, doi: 10.1186/1471-2288-8-45.
[28] V. Braun and V. Clarke, "Using thematic analysis in psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 77–101, 2006, doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.
[29] M. Ş. Bellibaş, S. Gümüş, and Y. Liu, "School leadership during times of crisis: A qualitative meta-synthesis," *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, advance online publication, 2023, doi: 10.1177/17411432231181854.
[30] W. T. Serrano and N. Galugu, "Transition experiences of mid-career educators to master teachers," *Journal of Teaching and Learning*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 45–62, 2023.
[31] N. P. Sukmawati and M. S. Budiani, "Enhancing teacher competency frameworks through contextual professional learning communities," *Studies in Inclusive Education and Leadership*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 112–128, 2023, doi: 10.5281/zenodo.8011195.
[32] K. Nielsen and M. Miraglia, "Workplace interventions for well-being: A systematic evaluation of structural versus individual approaches," *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*, advance online publication, 2023, doi: 10.1111/aphw.12456.
[33] S. Duncan and R. Pond, "Effective burnout prevention strategies for counsellors and other therapists: A systematic review and meta-synthesis of qualitative studies," *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, advance online publication, 2024, doi: 10.1080/09515070.2024.2394767.
[34] G. Loffreda, S. Arakelyan, I. Bou-Orm, H. Holmer, L. N. Allen, S. Witter, A. Ager, and K. Diaconu, "Environments to promote healthy eating and physical activity," *Implementation Science*, vol. 16, Art. no. 1176, 2021.
[35] I. M. Arimbawa, I. N. B. Hartawan, and I. M. G. D. L. Utama, "The correlation between nutritional status and clinical severity of dengue hemorrhagic fever in children at Sanglah General Hospital, Bali, Indonesia," *Warmadewa Medical Journal*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 48–52, 2019, doi: 10.22225/wmj.4.2.1795.48-52.
[36] Y. Wahyu and A. Lakehu, "Metacognitive strategy optimization and speaking behaviors in pre-service teacher training environments," *Education Sciences*, vol. 13, no. 9, Art. no. 927, 2023.
[37] A. MacDonald and J. Smith, "Structural barriers to clinical faculty promotion: Addressing emotional well-being," *Frontiers in Education*, vol. 7, Art. no. 938224, 2022.
[38] J. Kovacevic, S. Opić, and J. Bjekić, "Professional development of teachers for inclusive education: Challenges and opportunities," *International Journal of Cognitive Research in Science, Engineering and Education*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 263–274, 2023, doi: 10.23947/2334-8496-2023-11-2-263-274.
[39] M. Prado and J. Tomedi Martins, "Digital spaces and cognitive flexibility in higher education," *E3S Web of Conferences*, vol. 175, Art. no. 15027, 2020, doi: 10.1051/e3sconf/202017515027.

Authors



Clifford M. Inot is a graduate of Cebu Normal University, where he completed his bachelor's degree with the distinction of Magna Cum Laude. He has accumulated four years of teaching experience as a Science teacher, handling a wide range of science disciplines. His dedication to excellence in science education has inspired him to pursue graduate studies, and he is currently enrolled in the Master of Arts in Education (MAEd) major in Science Education program. He is committed to advancing science education through research, innovative instructional practices, and lifelong professional development.(email: cliffzinot@gmail.com).



Mary Jane C. Labor is a Licensed Professional Teacher and a Civil Service Professional Eligible, currently serving as a Senior High School Teacher I at Santiago National High School under the Department of Education Division of Agusan del Norte, where she teaches in the Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) strand. She graduated with a Bachelor in Technical Teacher Education major in Food and Services Management from the Surigao State College of Technology (now Surigao del Norte State University) and is currently pursuing her Master of Arts in Education major in Home Economics at Cebu Normal University. (email: maryjane.labor@deped.gov.ph).



Maria Nancy Q. Cadosales is a faculty member at Cebu Normal University, Philippines, under the College of Teacher Education. Her professional work is centered on teaching, teacher education, and academic engagement in higher education. She is involved in supporting the preparation and development of future educators through instruction and related academic activities. Her interests include education, teacher development, and initiatives that promote effective teaching and learning practices. (email: cadosalesm@cnu.edu.ph).