

Unveiling Well-Being in Education: Teachers' Perceptions and Experiences in Mental Health Support

PAQUIT MARY JANE A.

Abstract — This study explores the lived experiences, challenges, and perceptions of teachers regarding mental health support in promoting well-being in education within the Schools Division of City of Naga, Cebu during the School Year 2024–2025. It aims to understand how teachers experience and respond to mental health challenges, how they perceive school leadership's role in fostering mental wellness, and what barriers or enablers exist in integrating mental health support within school culture. Using qualitative research design, in-depth interviews were conducted with five teacher participants from various public schools in the division. Thematic analysis was used to extract patterns and insights from the data. Findings reveal that while teachers acknowledge their essential role in supporting student mental health, they often feel unprepared due to insufficient training and limited resources. Teachers highlighted that mental health policies are present but inconsistently implemented, often reduced to compliance tasks with minimal impact. The presence of a supportive school culture—where leadership models openness and promotes mental wellness—was found to be a critical enabler. Conversely, schools where mental health remains a taboo face greater difficulty in sustaining support systems. Participants expressed the need for ongoing, practical training, access to mental health professionals, and collaborative efforts involving all stakeholders. Teachers' narratives underscore a strong moral commitment to student well-being, yet systemic issues hinder effective practice. A school culture that embraces dialogue, leadership vulnerability, and collaboration emerged as a pivotal factor for sustainable implementation. To move from fragmented initiatives to meaningful practice, schools must integrate mental health into their core operations through clear policies, leadership commitment, and community engagement.

Keywords — *Mental health, teachers' perceptions, school culture, leadership, policy implementation, qualitative research*

I. Introduction

The study highlights the often-overlooked impact of teachers' mental health on students and the overall quality of education. Globally, countries like Finland and Canada have taken steps to support teacher resilience through mental health programs, and international bodies like WHO and UNESCO stress the importance of such initiatives in schools. In the Philippines, although laws like the Mental Health Act and DepEd policies exist, their implementation is inconsistent due to limited resources, training, and personnel.

In Naga City, Cebu, the situation mirrors national concerns, with only ten guidance counselors serving over 15,000 students, and many teachers experiencing burnout and stress.

Despite existing policies, mental health support is limited and mostly reactive. This research addresses the gap by focusing on the lived experiences of five teachers during the 2024–2025 school year, using a qualitative phenomenological approach. It aims to uncover effective mental health strategies in schools and advocate for systems tailored to specific educational contexts, though it acknowledges the limitations of its small sample size and localized scope.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This study explored the lived experiences, challenges, and perceptions of teachers regarding mental health support in unveiling well-being in education within Schools Division of City of Naga, Cebu during the School Year 2024-2025 with the end view of proposing a localized mental health program.

Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do teachers describe their experiences with mental health challenges and support systems within their schools?
2. How do teachers perceive the role school leaders in fostering a mentally healthy school environment through leadership practices and organizational culture?
3. What are the perceived barriers and enablers to integrating mental health support within the school's organizational culture?
4. Based on the findings of the study, what framework can be proposed?

II. Methodology

This study uses descriptive phenomenology, specifically following Amedeo Giorgi's (2009) methodology, to explore how teachers and school leaders in Naga City perceive mental health support systems. Grounded in Edmund Husserl's phenomenological tradition, the design aims to provide a systematic, unbiased description of educators lived experiences without imposing interpretations. It involves open-ended interviews with purposefully selected participants to capture essential insights.

Giorgi's four-step analysis—including phenomenological reduction, description, horizontalization, and synthesis—guides the data interpretation, emphasizing participants' subjective understandings of school mental health challenges, leadership practices, and organizational culture. Unlike interpretive phenomenology, this approach does not relate findings to broader theories but stays focused on the core of experience.

By avoiding statistical methods, the research highlights how educators experience and perceive mental health support, providing rich, contextual insights into the relationship between individual well-being and institutional structures in schools.

2.1 Procedure

The study followed a rigorous qualitative methodology, beginning with the development of a semi-structured interview guide and FGD protocols grounded in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. These instruments were validated by experts in educational leadership, mental health, and qualitative research. Ethical approvals were secured from the Graduate School Dean, the Schools Division Office, and participating school principals. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, confidentiality measures (using pseudonyms), and their voluntary rights during virtual orientation sessions.

Data were collected through online semi-structured interviews with 15 educators via Zoom (each lasting 45–60 minutes and audio recorded) and two hybrid-format FGDs with 6–8 participants each. Researchers maintained reflexive journals to track biases, observations, and emerging themes. Participants provided digital informed consent through Google Forms.

Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim using Otter.ai and manually verified for accuracy. Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework, from initial coding to final theme identification. The credibility of the findings was ensured through participant member checking and peer debriefing.

Upon completion, the findings were disseminated through a bound final report for the Graduate School Dean, an executive summary with policy recommendations for DepEd Naga, and personalized feedback sessions with participating schools. Throughout, the study maintained high ethical standards, methodological transparency, and a strong commitment to authentically representing participants' experiences with mental health support systems in schools.

2.2 Data Processing

The study applied Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith et al., 2009) in combination with Colaizzi's seven-step phenomenological method (1978) to explore teachers' experiences with mental health support programs. Verbatim transcription of all recordings was completed first, followed by repeated readings of participant narratives to deepen understanding. Key statements related to mental health, leadership support, and school culture were identified and organized into significant meaning units, which then evolved into thematic clusters.

Themes were refined through continual comparison of transcripts, emphasizing participants' meaning-making processes through hermeneutic interpretation. Patterns were integrated into a comprehensive description of the phenomenon, with member checking ensuring the accuracy of interpretations from the participants' perspective.

To ensure research quality, reflexive journaling was maintained to monitor researcher bias and decision-making throughout the analysis. Peer debriefing with two qualitative researchers helped achieve analytical consistency. The credibility of the study was strengthened by triangulating interview data, FGDs, and field notes. The combined IPA and Colaizzi approach yielded both participant-driven (emic) and researcher-informed (etic) insights into the realities of mental health support in schools.

III. Results and Discussion

Research Question # 1: How do teachers describe their experiences with mental health challenges and support systems within their schools?

Theme 1: Emotional Burden: The theme "Emotional Burden" highlights the significant psychological strain teachers face due to heavy workloads, emotional labor, and lack of support. Teachers invest deeply in their students' well-being but often receive little psychosocial support, leading to silent struggles with anxiety, fatigue, and burnout. Cultural expectations and professional pressure to appear resilient further prevent them from expressing their emotional distress. The absence of structured mental health programs and regular emotional debriefing worsens this isolation. The findings stress the need for schools to treat emotional burden as a systemic issue and integrate emotional support into their organizational culture.

Summary of 5 Significant Responses: *The five significant responses reveal a shared theme of emotional burden among teachers. They describe feeling emotionally drained due to large workloads, the constant emotional needs of students, and a lack of meaningful institutional support. Many carry students' struggles home with them, face internal anxiety, and feel isolated because emotional vulnerability is discouraged in school culture. While some wellness efforts exist, they are often inadequate or superficial. Teachers feel expected to act as counselors without training or support, leading to burnout, sleeplessness, and in some cases, mental health crises. Despite their love for teaching, many feel their emotional well-being is neglected and unsupported.*

Theme 2. Stigma Navigation. This theme highlights how teachers carefully manage their mental health in a professional culture where stigma and silence around emotional vulnerability persist. Despite growing awareness, many fear being judged or seen as weak, leading them to cope privately rather than seek institutional support. This results in hidden emotional labor and internal conflict. The findings emphasize the need to normalize mental health discussions in schools, with leaders modeling openness to reduce stigma and encourage support-seeking.

Summary of 5 Significant Responses: *The five responses highlight the deep stigma surrounding mental health in schools. Teachers describe a culture where emotional struggles are seen as signs of weakness or incompetence. Admitting to stress, anxiety, or burnout often leads to gossip, judgment, or being labeled as overly sensitive or unfit for the role. This fear of being*

misunderstood or penalized leads many to suffer in silence, hiding their pain to preserve their professional image.

Despite occasional gestures of support, actual mental health conversations remain taboo, especially for teachers. Colleagues may offer informal empathy, but institutional support is minimal or superficial. Teachers call for a cultural shift where mental health is openly acknowledged and addressed—starting with leadership normalizing vulnerability and prioritizing teacher well-being alongside student support.

Theme 3. Support Accessibility: This theme explores teachers' views on the availability and effectiveness of mental health support in schools. While some efforts by school leaders were recognized, participants noted limited, inconsistent access to meaningful services. Available support was often short-term or generic, lacking personalization and continuity. Factors such as time constraints, workload, and limited awareness further restricted access. The findings highlight the need for schools to develop sustainable, inclusive, and easily accessible mental health systems that respond directly to teachers' ongoing needs.

Summary of 5 Significant Responses: *The five responses emphasize the lack of accessible and practical mental health support for teachers. While mental health services are often mentioned in policies or programs, they are rarely easy to access, clearly communicated, or designed with teachers' needs in mind. Teachers describe being left to cope alone due to unclear procedures, overburdened administrators, or support systems focused solely on students.*

Efforts like wellness webinars or HR referrals feel superficial or overly formal, especially when teachers are already emotionally overwhelmed. The absence of proactive, visible, and teacher-specific mental health resources makes even reaching out feel discouraging or stigmatized. Respondents call for simple, immediate, and nonjudgmental support, such as in-school counselors, regular check-ins, mental wellness spaces, or trusted hotlines—underscoring that real accessibility means both ease of use and emotional safety.

Theme 4. Coping Strategies: This theme highlights the personal and informal ways teachers manage mental health challenges amid limited institutional support. Participants reported using relationships, spirituality, peer connections, and self-care activities like exercise or hobbies to cope. While these methods provided short-term relief, they often fell short in addressing the deeper emotional impact of teaching. The findings reveal that, despite teachers' resilience, the absence of structured support systems places the emotional burden solely on them, underscoring the need for schools to promote healthier coping environments and address systemic stressors.

Summary of 5 Significant Responses: *The five responses reveal how teachers are developing personal coping strategies to manage the emotional demands of their work in the absence of structured support. These self-made approaches—such as quiet morning routines, journaling, music, humor, creative hobbies, prayer, support circles, and boundary-setting—serve as vital tools for mental and emotional balance. Teachers rely on trusted colleagues, small acts of*

self-care, and intentional routines to reset and protect their well-being. While these methods help, respondents consistently note that coping is often a personal trial-and-error process, not something guided by school systems. They express a shared desire for institutional backing, such as structured wellness programs, emotional resilience training, and safe spaces for reflection and support. Overall, these voices underscore both the resourcefulness of teachers and the urgent need for schools to provide systematic, accessible mental health support.

Research Question # 2: How do teachers perceive the role school leaders in fostering a mentally healthy school environment through leadership practices and organizational culture?

Theme 1: Supportiveness:

This theme emphasizes the vital role of school leaders in fostering a mentally healthy work environment. Teachers reported that when leaders show genuine care, provide emotional and professional support, and create a judgment-free atmosphere, their well-being significantly improves. Supportive leadership includes offering resources, time, and open communication, making teachers feel valued and respected. Such a culture not only reduces stress but also empowers teachers to manage their roles effectively and model well-being for their students.

Summary of 5 Significant Responses: *These five responses emphasized the positive impact of supportive school leadership on teacher well-being. Teachers shared that when principals showed empathy, flexibility, and a genuine concern for their emotional health—such as by checking in privately, allowing time off, leading wellness activities, or simply being present—it created a safe and trusting environment.*

This kind of leadership fostered a culture where teachers felt valued, heard, and humanized, not just measured by performance. Respondents contrasted this with less empathetic leadership styles that felt performative or disconnected, reinforcing the idea that authentic, compassionate leadership was essential for reducing emotional strain and promoting a healthy school climate. Ultimately, supportive leaders empowered teachers to care for themselves, which enhanced both morale and performance.

Theme 2: Communication:

This theme highlights the crucial role of open and ongoing communication between school leaders and teachers in promoting mental well-being. Teachers emphasized that clear, two-way communication—where leaders actively listen and provide timely, transparent information—reduces stress and fosters trust. Open discussions about mental health resources and support initiatives help reduce stigma and make teachers feel included and supported. Effective communication ultimately creates a school culture where mental health is normalized, and teachers feel safe and empowered to seek help when needed.

Summary of 5 Significant Responses: *The responses highlighted the crucial role of empathetic and consistent communication in supporting teacher mental health. Teachers shared that when school leaders communicated clearly, respectfully, and regularly—especially during stressful periods—it helped ease anxiety and built trust. Open dialogue and emotional check-ins made teachers feel heard, valued, and safe to express concerns.*

While some schools still lacked open communication around mental health, efforts by principals to include motivational messages, offer listening spaces, and encourage two-way conversations fostered a stronger sense of support and unity. Overall, effective communication from school leaders played a key role in promoting emotional well-being and reducing feelings of isolation among teachers.

Theme 3. Empowerment:

This theme highlights how school leaders contribute to a mentally healthy environment by empowering teachers to take charge of their well-being and professional growth. Teachers shared that being given autonomy, decision-making opportunities, and access to relevant training enhances their confidence and resilience. Empowerment includes providing resources and support to build emotional intelligence and coping skills. When leaders invest in teachers' capacity and agency, it strengthens work-life balance, supports well-being, and cultivates a school culture that values mental health as integral to effective teaching and learning.

Summary of 5 Significant Responses: *These responses illustrated how empowerment from school leadership positively impacted teachers' mental well-being. Teachers shared that being involved in decision-making, trusted with responsibilities, and encouraged to lead initiatives or pursue professional growth fostered a sense of value, agency, and purpose.*

Empowerment reduced stress by giving teachers more control, confidence, and opportunities to thrive rather than merely cope. Whether through flexible classroom management, collaborative problem-solving, or leadership roles in wellness programs, school leaders who trusted and supported their staff helped cultivate resilience, reduce burnout, and promote a more emotionally sustainable work culture.

Theme 4: Culture:

This theme emphasizes the powerful role of school culture in shaping the mental health climate. Teachers highlighted that school leaders significantly influence this culture by fostering empathy, respect, and collaboration. A supportive culture includes clear mental health policies, openness about emotional challenges, and shared well-being initiatives. When leaders model these values and create safe spaces for dialogue, it builds a sense of inclusion and psychological safety. Ultimately, a positive school culture helps normalize mental health, benefiting both teachers and students.

Summary of 5 Significant Responses: *These five responses emphasized the powerful role of school culture—shaped by leadership—in supporting teachers’ mental health. Teachers described how positive shifts occurred when principals modeled openness, empathy, and consistency in promoting wellness. Practices like mindfulness activities, open dialogues, and small wellness efforts helped reduce stigma and encouraged emotional honesty among staff.*

Where leaders prioritized care and inclusivity, school culture became more supportive, collaborative, and emotionally safe. Conversely, in schools where leadership failed to follow through on wellness rhetoric, teachers felt disconnected and reluctant to express vulnerability. Overall, the responses showed that a mentally healthy school culture depended not on policy alone, but on the daily actions and tone set by leadership.

Research Question # 3: What are the perceived barriers and enablers to integrating mental health support within the school’s organizational culture?

Theme 1: Leadership Commitment:

This theme highlights the essential role of school leaders in embedding mental health support into the school culture. Teachers emphasized that when leaders show strong, visible commitment—by allocating resources, setting clear protocols, and actively participating in mental health initiatives—it signals that well-being is a priority. Such leadership fosters consistency, encourages teacher engagement, and integrates mental health into daily school life. In contrast, a lack of commitment leads to fragmented efforts and reduced impact. Active leadership involvement builds trust and motivates teachers to prioritize their own mental health.

Summary of 5 Significant Responses: *These five responses demonstrated that leadership commitment was a key driver in shaping how schools approached teacher mental health. In schools where principals prioritized wellness—through consistent actions, open dialogue, personal presence, and sustained initiatives—teachers felt supported, empowered, and more willing to care for their own well-being. Such leadership created a ripple effect, gradually transforming school culture to be more compassionate and emotionally safe.*

Conversely, in schools where leadership lacked follow-through or treated mental health as a formality, teachers experienced confusion, silence, and emotional neglect. The absence of consistent commitment led to isolation, burnout, and a culture where wellness was not integrated into daily practices.

Overall, the responses highlighted that meaningful support required more than policies—it depended on leaders who modeled empathy, initiated action, and sustained a shared vision for mental health. Where this commitment was strong, schools thrived as healthier, more connected communities.

Theme 2. Resource Availability: This theme highlights the crucial impact of accessible resources on effectively integrating mental health support in schools. Teachers noted that while policies may be in place, their success depends on the presence of key resources—such as trained professionals, counseling services, wellness spaces, and adequate funding. In the absence of these, schools struggle to meet mental health needs. Conversely, schools with ample resources and professional development opportunities are better equipped to foster awareness and a culture of care. Resource availability, therefore, is essential for sustaining meaningful and effective mental health support.

Summary of 5 Significant Responses: *These responses highlighted the critical role that resources—or the lack thereof—played in the integration of mental health support within schools. Teachers consistently pointed out that even when school heads expressed concern for mental well-being, their efforts often fell short without trained personnel, sustainable funding, clear protocols, or accessible materials.*

Respondents described wellness initiatives as rare, underfunded, and often symbolic rather than systemic. Mental health programs were usually event-based, lacking follow-up, structure, and professional guidance. The absence of dedicated staff and usable materials left many teachers to fend for themselves, making mental health feel more like a personal burden than a shared institutional responsibility.

However, one response illustrated that resourcefulness—such as partnerships with external organizations or the use of digital platforms—could help bridge gaps. These examples demonstrated that while budget constraints were real, leadership creativity and commitment made a difference.

Ultimately, these reflections underscored that mental health support required more than good intentions; it needed practical infrastructure, consistent investment, and strong leadership will. Without resources, efforts remained fragmented, and mental health continued to be a secondary concern in school culture.

Theme 3: Cultural Openness:

This theme emphasizes the vital role of a school's cultural attitude in either enabling or hindering mental health support. Teachers shared that when schools foster openness—by removing stigma, encouraging dialogue, and normalizing help-seeking—mental health initiatives are more successfully integrated. In contrast, schools where mental health is viewed as taboo face greater challenges in providing support. Leadership that models vulnerability and prioritizes mental well-being helps create an inclusive environment. Ultimately, a culture of openness is key to sustaining effective, long-term mental health programs within schools.

Summary of 5 Significant Responses: *These responses highlighted the critical role of cultural openness in integrating mental health support in schools. Teachers emphasized that an*

accepting, emotionally honest school culture—where vulnerability was not judged—created a strong foundation for sustainable mental health practices.

In schools where leadership modeled openness through consistent check-ins, relatable stories, and inclusive language, teachers felt encouraged to share their emotional struggles. Peer support networks and reflective practices also emerged, helping to normalize conversations about mental health as part of daily professional life. These practices reduced stigma and fostered empathy, strengthening both teacher well-being and workplace cohesion.

Conversely, some respondents described environments where stigma remained entrenched. In such schools, mental health was treated as a private matter, often perceived as a weakness or liability. Teachers feared judgment or professional consequences, leading to a culture of silence and emotional isolation. Where leadership focused solely on performance or compliance, opportunities for meaningful dialogue and support were absent.

Ultimately, the responses underscored that cultural openness was not automatic—it required consistent leadership, shared vulnerability, and deliberate inclusion of mental wellness in everyday conversations. Without this foundation, even well-intentioned programs struggled to take root. But when openness was cultivated intentionally, it transformed mental health from a taboo into a shared responsibility.

Theme 4: Policy Implementation:

This theme explores the gap between mental health policy creation and its practical execution in schools. Teachers reported that while policies often exist, they are inconsistently applied or lack the necessary support for real impact. Successful implementation requires clear communication, sufficient resources, and strong leadership commitment. In schools where policies are actively integrated—through wellness programs, assigned staff, and structured support—teachers feel more supported. Conversely, weak enforcement leaves teachers disconnected from intended support. The theme underscores the need for sincere, consistent, and regularly evaluated policy implementation to build a truly supportive mental health environment.

Summary of 5 Significant Responses: *These five responses revealed the critical gap between mental health policies issued by the Department of Education and their actual implementation in schools. While policies on teacher wellness and mental health support existed, they were often underutilized, inconsistently applied, or reduced to token compliance tasks.*

Teachers shared that most policies were introduced during orientations or issued via memoranda but were rarely translated into sustainable practice. Wellness activities were often one-time events, and initiatives like Mental Health Corners or wellness committees started strong but faded quickly due to lack of follow-through, training, or monitoring. The absence of dedicated focal persons, clear guidelines, and accountability systems further weakened policy implementation.

Respondents also pointed out a disconnect between the spirit of these policies and their lived experiences. Policies promised support, but daily realities—tight schedules, heavy workloads, limited space, and no teacher involvement in planning—contradicted that promise. The lack of consultation with teachers on how to implement mental health programs led to disengagement and frustration.

Furthermore, successful implementation often depended on the initiative of individual school heads, which led to unequal outcomes across schools. Without structural support and system-wide consistency, policies remained symbolic rather than transformative.

Ultimately, the responses emphasized that for mental health policies to make a real difference, they must be:

- *Clear, specific, and contextualized to the school level*
- *Supported by training, resources, and leadership commitment*
- *Embedded into regular school operations and planning*
- *Co-owned by all stakeholders, not just school administrators*

Only through consistent, practical, and participatory implementation can policies move from paper to practice—and become a lasting part of a school’s culture

Discussion

Teachers in the Schools Division of City of Naga acknowledged their vital role in supporting students’ mental health, viewing it as part of their responsibilities despite their primary focus on academic instruction. This sense of moral obligation echoed findings by O’Toole (2023). However, many educators felt unprepared to address mental health concerns due to insufficient training and limited resources, underscoring the need for comprehensive professional development.

A major challenge identified was the inconsistent implementation of mental health policies. Although policies existed at the administrative level, their execution often lacked consistency and sustainability. Teachers reported that wellness programs were sporadic and poorly managed, which contributed to frustration and a perceived lack of genuine commitment to mental health support. The absence of designated mental health personnel further compounded this issue, pointing to the need for structured leadership and accountability.

School culture also significantly influenced mental health support. In schools that encouraged open dialogue, teachers felt supported and more comfortable discussing well-being. In contrast, stigma and silence in other schools led educators to suppress concerns, increasing

stress. Teachers believed that leadership modeling openness and vulnerability could help build a culture of inclusion and support.

Educators expressed a strong need for more practical and tailored mental health training. While some had received basic instruction, they found it inadequate for addressing complex student needs. They also emphasized the importance of having access to mental health professionals within schools to provide ongoing guidance and support.

Finally, teachers highlighted the importance of collaboration among educators, administrators, and mental health professionals. They believed that a unified, cooperative approach would strengthen mental health initiatives, create a shared sense of responsibility, and foster a more supportive school environment for both students and teachers.

Summary and Findings

The purpose of the study was to learn about teachers' experiences and opinions on mental health at school in Naga City, Cebu. When thematic analysis was done on the in-depth interviews, the following results were identified for every question in the research:

1. Teachers' Experiences with Mental Health Challenges and Support Systems:

Teachers reported high emotional stress due to heavy workloads, added responsibilities, and insufficient support. While informal peer support existed, formal mental health services were rare or inconsistent, leaving many teachers to manage their struggles alone out of fear of judgment.

2. Teachers' Perceptions of School Leadership's Role:

Leadership was seen as a key influence on school mental health. Supportive, respectful leaders helped foster a healthier environment, while rigid, indifferent leadership often neglected mental well-being. A strong leadership commitment was viewed as essential for promoting mental health practices.

3. Barriers and Enablers to Integration:

Challenges included a lack of trained personnel, limited funding, vague policies, and stigma. On the other hand, peer support, proactive leadership, and a culture of openness and collaboration were identified as enablers. Successful integration depended on sustained leadership and active community involvement.

4. Proposed Framework: The study recommended a place-based mental health framework involving:

- (1) leaders openly promoting mental health,

- (2) staff receiving mental health training, and
- (3) embedding mental health into school culture.

This approach aims to create a unified, locally tailored support system.

IV. Conclusion

- **Emotional Demands on Teachers:**

Teaching is emotionally challenging due to many responsibilities and lack of consistent mental health support. Teachers often hide their stress, which affects their health and performance.

- **Impact of Leadership:**

Supportive and understanding school leaders help promote mental health, while passive leadership increases stigma and neglect of mental health issues.

- **Challenges and Enablers of Support:**

Providing mental health support is difficult because of resource shortages and stigma. However, it becomes possible when leaders set positive examples, staff support each other, and open conversations are encouraged.

- **Proposed Local Strategy:**

A place-based mental health plan is needed, involving active leadership, regular staff training, and the integration of mental health practices into daily school routines.

V. Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance mental health support within schools in the Schools Division of City of Naga:

1. **Strengthen Support Services:**

Schools should hire guidance counselors or wellness officers and conduct regular wellness checks for teachers. Safe, non-judgmental spaces must be created for teachers to express their emotions.

2. **Enhance Leadership Training:**

School leaders should receive training in mental health and emotional intelligence, enabling them to foster supportive environments and model openness in discussing mental health.

3. **Address Systemic Barriers:**

Solutions include smart budgeting, reducing teacher workload, promoting mental health awareness, partnering with mental health organizations, and addressing stigma and bullying at the community level.

4. **Implement a Local Mental Health Framework:**

A place-based strategy should focus on leadership by example, developing teacher capacity, and embedding mental health into school policies and culture, tailored to the needs of Naga City's Schools Division.

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