



Understanding Pre-Service Teachers' Mental Health Problems and Resilience Mechanisms during Teaching Practice at Mzumbe University

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Abstract

The world is experiencing the proliferation of mental health problem that affects productivity in many aspects. Pre-service teachers also experience mental health problems due to various contextual and work environments. Using Bowlby's attachment theory, the study explored pre-service teachers' resilience to mental health problems during teaching practices. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design with a sample size of 96 respondents who were randomly selected from pre-service teachers studying at Mzumbe University. The data collection method used a questionnaire. The findings reveal that pre-service teachers experienced mental health problems during teaching practice caused by a lack of mental health literacy (60%) and anxiety about evaluations (65%). However, RII (0.579) indicates that most factors moderately caused mental health problems. Mental health problems affect pre-service teachers, as 61% contemplated leaving the teaching profession and 61% faced challenges in engagement with students in teaching practices, and the RII (0.4873) indicates a low importance level. Further, findings show that pre-service teachers devised resilience mechanisms, such as 75% used stress-relief techniques like exercise and being calm and 73% made self-reflection and adjustment, where the RII (0.0.7451) indicates these mechanisms provided moderate support in coping with causes of mental health problems. Findings imply the need to devise mental health support systems for pre-service teachers to ensure their well-being and career success. The study recommends that teacher training institutions integrate mental health training into curricula and devise mentorship programs to equip pre-service teachers with the knowledge and skills to identify and manage mental health problems in their work environment.

Keywords: *mental health problem; pre-service teachers; teaching practice, resilience*

Introduction

Mental health problems among pre-service teachers (PST) during teaching practice have become a significant concern in education as they transit from theoretical knowledge to practical application (Ressler et al., 2022). Research highlights that pre-service teachers frequently experience heightened levels of anxiety, depression, and stress, which can adversely affect their classroom performance and ability to support students' needs (Bautista et al., 2024; Gorospe, 2022; Huang, 2024). While teaching practice offers them essential opportunities for developing pedagogical skills through merging theories and practice, PSTs encounter challenges such as lesson planning pressures and classroom management expectations that contribute to emotional distress (Mpate et al., 2023). Additionally, the lack of training in mental health literacy leaves pre-service teachers feeling unprepared to address their own mental health needs and those of their students (Gunawardena et al., 2024; Gilham et al., 2021). A lack of a systematic approach to mental health training in pre-service programs underlines the need for evidence-based strategies to prepare future educators to recognise and respond to mental health problems effectively (Rahmi, 2024). Understanding mental challenges is crucial for creating effective support systems within teacher education programs. Therefore, this study sought to explore pre-service teachers' mental health problems and resilience mechanisms during teaching practice.

Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, and function productively in contributing to their community (Charlson et al., 2019; Fusar-Poli et al., 2020; Gorczynski et al., 2023). It affects how people react to stressors, engage with others, make choices, and use their abilities in harmony with the universal values of society. According to the Mental Health Atlas (2020), a mental health problem is a state characterised by a clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotional regulation, or behaviour. Studies indicate that, due to various factors causing mental health problems, such as excessive workload, inadequate resources, and poor working conditions, teachers have been increasingly susceptible to stress, anxiety, and depression, resulting in declining mental health (Sáez-Delgado et al., 2022).

Diverse factors are causing mental health problems among teachers, ranging from historical background to social and work-environment issues. Work environment, leadership, and workload were the leading causes of stress (Mwakasangula &

Mwita, 2020; Rahmi, 2024). Alvites-Huamani (2019) shows that excessive administrative duties, overcrowded classrooms, long working hours, inadequate infrastructure, role ambiguity, uncertainty, lack of professional growth, student behaviour challenges, and government pressure also led to mental health problems. The relationship between teachers and leadership is related to demand and expected output, such as having more periods and demanding students' performance without adequate resources, which affects teachers. Moreover, Singh and Gautam (2024) identified factors such as gender, job happiness, and teaching experience as determinants of mental health problems depending on how they are communicated to teachers. Inadequacy and insufficient mental health training during teacher preparation further complicate their experiences (McDonough, 2024). Schonfeld et al. (2017) describe factors responsible for mental health problems among teachers. These factors include insufficient preparation time for teaching, challenges with managing disruptive student behaviour, the rise of tension among workers, negative perception of the teaching profession, and job insecurity. Alvites-Huamani (2019) further considers the elements that contribute to teachers' mental health problems and stress, such as their pay, in-service training, poor community cooperation, and student misbehaviour. Fang et al. (2023) say the cause of teachers' stress is frequently a change in the education system and emotional exhaustion. Teachers often face excessive workloads, including lesson planning, grading, and administrative tasks, leading to burnout and decreased job satisfaction. These demands during teaching practice also increase the level of anxiety, burnout and depression among pre-service teachers (Bautista et al., 2024; Méndez-López, 2020). Mental health problems are also associated with stress due to low income, a lack of advancement, a lack of participation in decision-making and improper communication (Alvites-Huamani, 2019; Mbata, 2018). Asa and Lasebikan (2016) found that males were more likely than females to experience stress, be single, and be older than 29. These stressors can lead to severe mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and burnout, with studies indicating that teachers have one of the lowest levels of psychological well-being compared to other professions.

The effects of persistent mental health problems on in-service teachers due to challenging work environments resulted in negative emotions such as fatigue and anxiety, which made them less committed and probably look for other opportunities elsewhere (Singh & Gautam, 2024). Mbata (2018) found that mental health problems emanating from pressures at work developed physical disturbances like back pain, difficulty sleeping, stomach upset, and muscle aches from work strains, which exhausted their energy and affected their productivity in school. Alvites-

Huamani (2019) and Fang et al. (2023) found that stress harms teaching morale, increases absenteeism and burnout, and increases psychological and mental health diseases like depression, anxiety, and emotional fatigue. Schonfeld et al. (2017) report a decline in teaching quality, an increase in turnover and absenteeism among teachers due to declining job satisfaction and performance in the classroom. Mental health problems significantly affect teachers' effectiveness and their teaching practices. Teachers experiencing high levels of mental health problems often show decreased productivity and effectiveness in the classroom, which can negatively influence student learning outcomes.

Addressing these mental health problems requires integrating mental health training into teacher preparation curricula and establishing mentorship programs for guidance and emotional support (Shanks et al., 2022; Zito et al., 2024). Studies have shown strategies that teachers use to address mental health problems, but also recommend some other approaches that could be helpful. Proper time management, work-life balance, regular physical exercises and sharing problems with colleagues are pivotal in reducing mental health problems (Mwakasangula & Mwita, 2020). Some scholars suggest developing mental health literacy training, continuous professional development, establishing supportive school environments, training that emphasises understanding mental health problems and social support from colleagues and the broader community (Fang et al., 2023; Rahmi, 2024). These approaches are ideal; however, their implementation depends on the availability of time, financial and human resources. Asa and Lasebikan (2016) suggested that school health services, including mental health services, should be adopted so teachers can be periodically screened and evaluated for mental health problems. Those identified will receive support and monitoring over time to assess their well-being. Also, Singh and Gautam (2024) advised educational officials to create regulations that put teachers' well-being first, particularly in emergencies. This entails addressing issues influencing job happiness and implementing policies to assist educators' mental health. In many schools, the health services for staff are lacking, making these recommendations critical for the administration to consider their establishment. Education authorities should promote reducing non-teaching, simplifying administrative tasks for educators, establishing mental health resources to promote teachers' mental well-being, and enhancing the working environment (Adkins-Cartee et al., 2019). Alvites-Huamani (2019) suggests that besides stress management training and promoting interaction, infrastructural improvement to reduce workload and overcrowding and providing necessary materials for teachers for a supportive working environment is crucial. Schonfeld et al. (2017) suggest a

holistic approach to getting rid of anxiety, depression, and burnout, which inversely promotes well-being.

The study draws its theoretical framework from Bowlby's Attachment Theory (AT), developed in 1969, emphasising the importance of safe attachments for emotional regulation and overall well-being (Goswami, 2024). This implies that attachment depends on emotional adjustment to fit a new position or place, and failure to adjust emotions can lead to feeling detached. Although the initial development of the AT focused on how infants develop attachment bonds with people around them, the construct of the theory has been widely used to study attachment in workplaces in various aspects, including teachers and their consequences. Teachers with secure emotional attachments to their work environment, like feeling safe, valued, respected, engaged, and supported, tend to develop good well-being free from stress, anxiety, and fear. Simpson et al. (2021) show principles of the AT that relate to teacher management of mental health problems. These principles are; i) the proximity of engaging with important others who show care is for safety and survival, ii) type of attachments, secure or insecure, shape internal working models of the self and others, and iii) attachment security is an inner resource that can facilitate resilience, whereas attachment insecurity is a vulnerability often associated with poorer life outcomes. Teachers who experience high workloads, pressures to achieve outcomes, an unfriendly or hostile work environment that promotes fear and anxiety and a lack of work-life balance develop insecure feelings. The theory reflects the question regarding understanding the causes and resilience of pre-service teachers in attaching themselves to the working environment. The design collected data from pre-service teachers who had attended teaching practice for 16 weeks to understand their perceptions and behavioural attitudes regarding the misconducts they observed.

Despite studies researching on the presence of mental health problems, highlighting factors causing, including depression and stress from huge workload, scarce resources, poor mental health literacy and administrative issues (Bautista et al., 2024; Mpate et al., 2023; Gunawardena et al., 2024), there is still a gap concerning systemic interventions integrated in teacher education programs that prepares pre-service teachers. Limited studies have focused on how pre-service teachers are resilient to mental health problems after being trained in these programs in determining the long-term effectiveness of strategies of mental health literacy and mentorship support in improving teaching practices (Rahmi, 2024; Shanks et al., 2022). Although the study focuses on the resilient mechanism, it is vital to understand the contextual causes and effects of mental health problems to make the

adjustment strategies more effective. Therefore, this study sought to answer the following questions: a) What causes mental health problems among pre-service teachers during teaching practice? b) How do those mental health problems affect pre-service teachers' teaching practices? and c) How are pre-service teachers resilient to factors causing mental health problems during teaching practice?

Methodology

This descriptive study explored mental health problems among pre-service teachers. The descriptive design systematically collects and describes the behaviours, opinions, or attitudes of a particular population or group of interest for analysis, as Leavy (2022) describes. It involves using statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques to interpret and derive conclusions that can be generalised to a broader population (Ghanad, 2023). The study was conducted at Mzumbe University, where the population was 126 third-year pre-service teachers who conducted their teaching practice twice, in 2023 during their first year and 2024 during their second year. The respondents attended 16 weeks of teaching practices; hence, they were able to share their valuable practical experience regarding mental health problems during their teaching practices. The university offers a core course on educational careers, guidance and counselling to pre-service teachers that prepares them to manage the working environment, avoid mental health problems, and advise and counsel their students. In this regard, the university and the selected provided the right context for conducting this study. Researchers used Yamane's formula to determine sample size and obtained a sample of 96 respondents who filled in a questionnaire. The respondents were randomly selected, and those who came first to submit their teaching practice reports were given a questionnaire to fill in. We stopped collecting after reaching the required number.

The study used a questionnaire with five-point Likert statements to collect data regarding mental health experiences, particularly with the variables of causes of mental health problems among pre-service teachers, their effect on teaching practices, and mitigation strategies. The scale ranged from 1 = (SD) Strongly Disagree to 5 = (SA) Strongly Agree. Using IBM SPSS software version 29, researchers analysed data in descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) and presented them in tables. To ensure validity and reliability of the study, researchers reviewed the instrument and compared it with the set objectives, ensuring it contained all the information that answered the set questions and addressed the objectives, as Coleman (2022) and Rusticus (2024) opine. The draft tools were shared with experienced faculty researchers for review and improvement before

conducting a pilot test with 13 second-year pre-service teachers to identify any ambiguity and clarity of items before administering them to the targeted population. The analysis also employed frequencies, percentages and the Relative Importance Index (RII) to determine the strongest factor causing mental health problems among pre-service teachers. The RII analysis interpreted factors' score as 0.0-0.25 (No Importance = **NI**), 0.26 - 0.50 (Low Importance = **LI**), 0.51 - 0.75 (Moderate Importance = **MI**) and 0.76 - 1.0 (High Importance = **HI**). The study adhered to research ethics that scholars recommend, such as getting approval from management, informing participants of the research purpose, obtaining their consent and right to withdraw, and ensuring confidentiality and anonymity of information collected (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Rana et al., 2023). Researchers also refrained from data fabrication, plagiarism, and misinterpreting the obtained information.

Results and Discussion

This study explored pre-service teachers' mental health problems and resilience mechanisms during teaching practice. Specifically, it researched the causes of mental health problems among pre-service teachers during teaching practice and their impact on their teaching practices, and it devised resilient mechanisms for persevering in such situations.

The Causes of Mental Health Problems Among Pre-service Teachers

The RII analysis shows six out of ten factors (with an average of 0.579 = **MI**) indicate moderate importance (See Table 1). However, the individual findings suggest that the most potent cause of pre-service teachers' mental health problems during teaching practice includes experiencing anxiety during the preparation of lesson plans and teaching aids for my classes and the weak support they receive from the experienced teachers and peers. Also, the pressure came from the struggle of integrating technology in teaching, fearing that university supervisors might award them low scores during assessment. These observations are similar to Mwakasangula and Mwita (2020), Singh and Gautam (2024), Fernández-Batanero et al. (2021) and Çoklar and Yurdakul (2017), who found that weak support and collaborative partnership with experienced colleagues contribute to stress. The findings contradict the Attachment Theory, which posits that the proximity of engaging with experienced teachers signifies safety and career-long anticipation. Hence, when these pre-service teachers feel devalued and disrespected due to a lack of cooperation, their working intentions are jeopardised, and their teaching practices are influenced negatively. The findings imply that pre-service teachers

have low self-efficacy, requiring close mentorship and support to develop into experienced and confident teachers. Feeling unprepared to deal with unexpected events in the classroom did not worry them, and they believe teacher education programs have adequately prepared them for managing some of the mental health problems in the classroom.

Most pre-service teachers (60.4%) do not doubt their teaching abilities, suggesting their self-confidence is relatively strong. However, 20.9% of those who agree with experiencing doubts indicate a significant minority that may struggle with self-efficacy, which can contribute to stress during teaching practice. Over half (53.1%) of the respondents feel they receive adequate support from peers and mentors, a positive indicator of their social support systems during teaching practice. The observation is in line with Alvites-Huamani (2019), who found that a lack of cooperation leads to stress and mental health problems. When there is cooperation, teachers develop self-efficacy in teaching practices. However, a notable percentage (34.4%) disagree, highlighting that some pre-service teachers may feel isolated or unsupported, potentially exacerbating their stress levels. Most pre-service teachers (55.2%) feel their workload is manageable, suggesting they are coping well with their teaching responsibilities. However, 31.2% of those who disagree indicate that workload management remains a concern for some, which could lead to increased stress if not addressed. The findings resonate with Mwakasangula and Mwita (2020) and Singh and Gautam (2024), who reported that the workload increases teachers' stress, which ultimately causes mental health problems among teachers and affects their productivity.

A significant portion (43.8%) of respondents do not feel they struggle with integrating technology into their teaching due to limited skills, indicating that many are comfortable with technology use in education. However, the fact that 36.5% agree they struggle suggests that technology integration is still a challenge for many pre-service teachers. A substantial majority (62.5%) report receiving sufficient support from experienced teachers during their practicum, which is crucial for their development and mental well-being as future educators. The lower disagreement percentage (21.9%) indicates that, while most feel supported, some lack adequate mentorship. More than half of the respondents (51%) do not experience anxiety when preparing lesson plans and teaching aids, suggesting effective coping strategies or confidence in their planning abilities among many pre-service teachers. However, the significant percentage agreeing with anxiety (32.3%) highlights an area where additional support may be beneficial (See Table 1). Teacher's stressful experience in integrating technology in classroom echoes the

study by Fernández-Batanero et al. (2021), and Çoklar and Yurdakul (2017) who reported that teachers face hardship and have high level of anxiety or stress due to their use of educational technology in the classroom, particularly when they cannot have access to facilities and technology literacy. Call for scaffolding measures at workplaces, such as school-based professional development programs.

Table 1: Causes of Mental Health Problems

SN	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total	RII	Rank	Status
		<i>f (%)</i>	<i>f (%)</i>	<i>f (%)</i>	<i>f (%)</i>	<i>f (%)</i>	<i>f (%)</i>			
	I often doubted my teaching abilities, which contributed to my stress during teaching practice	43 (44.8)	15 (15.6)	18 (18.8)	11 (11.5)	9 (9.4)	96 (100)	0.45	8	LI
	I have adequate support from my peers and mentors during my teaching practice	21 (21.9)	12 (12.5)	12 (12.5)	12 (12.5)	39 (40.6)	96 (100)	0.675	3	MI
	I had a manageable number of periods that did not overwhelm me during my teaching practice.	25 (26.0)	5 (5.2)	13 (13.5)	15 (15.6)	38 (39.6)	96 (100)	0.675	4	MI
	During teaching practice, I struggled with integrating technology into my teaching practice due to limited skills.	30 (31.3)	12 (12.5)	19 (19.8)	14 (14.6)	21 (21.9)	96 (100)	0.567	5	MI
	I got sufficient support from experienced teachers during my practicum.	16 (16.7)	6 (6.3)	14 (14.6)	12 (12.5)	48 (50.5)	96 (100)	0.742	2	MI
	I experience anxiety when preparing lesson plans and teaching aids for my classes.	41 (42.7)	8 (8.3)	16 (16.7)	11 (11.5)	20 (20.8)	96 (100)	0.773	1	HI
	I always fear receiving feedback from my mentor teachers	37 (38.5)	9 (9.4)	21 (21.9)	7 (7.3)	22 (22.9)	96 (100)	0.533	6	MI
	I feel unprepared to deal with unexpected events in the classroom, which makes me feel worried	54 (56.3)	14 (14.6)	11 (11.5)	4 (4.2)	13 (13.5)	96 (100)	0.408	10	LI
	The teacher education program adequately prepares me for managing mental health problems in the classroom.	50 (51.2)	10 (10.4)	14 (14.6)	7 (7.3)	15 (15.6)	96 (100)	0.448	9	LI
	I experience anxiety on being evaluated by my supervisors during my teaching practice	12 (12.5)	4 (4.2)	15 (15.6)	19 (19.8)	46 (47.9)	96 (100)	0.519	7	MI
	Average							0.579		MI

Source: Field data

While nearly half of the respondents (47.9%) do not fear feedback from mentor teachers, a considerable portion (30.2%) does express fear regarding feedback, indicating that anxiety related to evaluation may affect their performance and mental health. An overwhelming majority (70.9%) feel prepared to handle unexpected events in the classroom, suggesting strong confidence in classroom management skills among most pre-service teachers; however, the smaller percentage (17.7%) agreeing with feeling unprepared indicates that some may require additional training in crisis management. The findings indicate that many pre-service (62%) teachers do not believe their education program adequately prepares them for managing mental health problems in the classroom, highlighting a critical gap in teacher training programs that could affect their well-being and ability to support students effectively. The majority of pre-service teachers experience anxiety about being evaluated by supervisors during their teaching practice, as indicated by approximately 69%. These findings align with Kihwele and Kihwele (2023), who asserted that teacher preparation programs, provided briefly, were insufficient to equip teachers in content and pedagogy, requiring continuous practices to enhance their professional competencies. Therefore, developing a fear of assessment and developing a grip of managing classrooms (i.e., behaviours, learning activities, and preparations) will gradually dwindle, allowing self-efficacy development. This suggests that the evaluation process needs to provide constructive feedback in a friendly and co-operative manner to reduce anxiety.

Effects of Mental Stress on the Pre-service Teachers

Most (49.9%) of pre-service teachers disagree that having many periods per week affects their preparation for lesson plans and teaching aids, suggesting that many feel capable of managing their workload. However, a notable portion (24%) agrees that it does affect their preparation, indicating that workload can still be a stressor for some and affect their teaching from preparation to classroom delivery. Similar to the study of Mwakasangula and Mwita (2020), Singh and Gautam (2024) found that a considerable workload affects teachers' productivity. Most respondents (56.2%) disagreed that they find it hard to concentrate due to technology integration challenges, suggesting that many can manage these issues effectively. However, 26% agreed, which still indicates that a significant minority struggles with technology-related stress, potentially affecting their focus and teaching performance. These observations reflect Fernández-Batanero et al. (2021) and Çoklar and Yurdakul (2017) 's studies, which show that teachers fail to effectively teach due to the requirements of integrating technology, where the majority fail as

they lack facilities or pedagogical content knowledge. Over half of the respondents (52.1%) disagreed that time constraints significantly affect their ability to prepare practical lessons, indicating they feel capable of managing their schedules. However, nearly one-third (29.2%) agreed, highlighting that time management remains challenging for a notable portion of pre-service teachers, as indicated in Table 2. Although the RII analysis shows that the score of seven factors indicates these effects are less important (LI) to most respondents. This indicates that most of the factors do not affect the majority of respondents.

Table 2: Effects of Mental Health Problems

SN	Statement	SD	A	N	D	SA	Total	RII	Rank	Status
		<i>f (%)</i>	<i>f (%)</i>	<i>f (%)</i>	<i>f (%)</i>	<i>f (%)</i>	<i>f (%)</i>			
	I had many periods per week that affected my preparation of lesson plans and teaching aids	30 (31.3)	18 (18.8)	18 (18.8)	7 (7.3)	23 (24.0)	96 (100)	0.548	1	MI
	I find it hard to concentrate on my teaching responsibilities when overwhelmed by Technology integration challenges.	39 (40.6)	15 (15.6)	17 (17.7)	10 (10.4)	15 (15.6)	96 (100)	0.49	4	LI
	Stress from time constraints affects my ability to prepare practical lessons for my students	34 (35.4)	16 (16.7)	18 (18.8)	12 (12.5)	16 (16.7)	96 (100)	0.517	3	MI
	I have experienced physical symptoms (e.g., headaches, fatigue) related to anxiety about being evaluated during practicum.	36 (37.5)	13 (13.5)	17 (17.4)	9 (9.4)	21 (21.9)	96 (100)	0.529	2	MI
	High levels of stress from feeling isolated from my peers make me consider leaving the teaching profession altogether	42 (43.8)	19 (19.8)	12 (12.5)	7 (7.3)	16 (16.7)	96 (100)	0.467	7	LI
	Lack of support from experienced teachers affected my overall satisfaction with my teaching practice	45 (46.9)	14 (14.6)	16 (16.7)	7 (7.4)	13 (13.7)	95 (99)	0.451	9	LI
	The strict requirements of the head of school and mentor teachers to prepare a lesson plan and teaching aid made me hate teaching.	44 (45.8)	10 (10.4)	17 (17.7)	10 (10.4)	15 (15.6)	96 (100)	0.479	5	LI
	I find it difficult to engage with my students when I am struggling with classroom management challenges	46 (47.9)	15 (15.6)	13 (13.5)	9 (9.4)	13 (13.5)	96 (100)	0.45	10	LI
	My confidence in my teaching abilities has decreased due to unpreparedness during the practicum.	41 (42.7)	14 (14.6)	20 (20.8)	8 (8.3)	12 (12.5)	95 (100)	0.465	8	LI
	Sometimes I left the classroom before time due to the unfriendly behaviours of students, such as asking difficult questions and not respecting me	42 (43.8)	15 (15.6)	13 (13.5)	12 (12.5)	14 (14.6)	96 (100)	0.477	6	LI
	Average							0.4873		LI

Source: Field data

While a majority (51%) disagreed with experiencing physical symptoms like headaches or fatigue due to anxiety about evaluations, a substantial minority

(31.3%) reported such symptoms, indicating that evaluation-related stress is a significant issue for some pre-service teachers and can manifest physically. These findings are similar to those of Singh and Gautam (2024), Mbata (2018) and Alvites-Huamani (2019), who found that stress has negatively affected teaching and increased psychological and mental health problems like depression, anxiety, and emotional fatigue. Again, a large majority (63.6%) disagreed with the statement about isolation, which made them consider leaving the profession, suggesting that most pre-service teachers feel resilient. However, nearly one-quarter (24%) agreed it is concerning, as it suggests that feelings of isolation could lead some to question their career choice. Most respondents (61.5%) disagreed that a lack of support from experienced teachers affected their satisfaction, indicating that many feel supported during their practicum. However, 21.1% of those who agreed pointed to gaps in mentorship and support systems for some pre-service teachers.

A majority of respondents (56.2%) disagreed that strict requirements for lesson planning made them dislike teaching, showing resilience among most pre-service teachers in handling these expectations. Most respondents (63.5%) disagreed with finding it difficult to engage students due to classroom management challenges, suggesting confidence in handling classroom dynamics for most pre-service teachers; however, the quarter who agreed highlights an area needing attention in teacher training programs. The data indicate that many pre-service teachers feel their confidence in teaching abilities has decreased due to unpreparedness during practicum, highlighting a critical area where additional training and support may be necessary. Nearly half of the respondents express having left the classroom early due to unfriendly behaviours from students, suggesting significant challenges in managing student interactions and classroom dynamics. These findings resonate with Schonfeld et al. (2017), who found that due to persistent stress in teaching, they have capitulated to mental health problems, where some teachers contemplate turning away from the teaching profession.

Regarding the effects of mental health problems on pre-service teachers, the RII ranks the following top four factors as;

1. It affected their preparation of lesson plans and teaching aids for other periods;
2. They experienced physical symptoms such as headaches and fatigue due to anxiety about the university instructors' assessment during the practicum;
3. They experienced stress as time constraints affect my ability to prepare practical lessons for my students; and

4. They felt overwhelmed by teaching responsibilities, particularly the challenge of integrating technology into teaching.

These effects have a severe impact not only on teachers but also on students' learning if not controlled. However, the mental health problems they experienced did not affect their engagement with students and managing their learning behaviours, lack of support did not affect their teaching activities and their self-efficacy in classroom situations, though they contributed to mounting mental health problems due to stress and feeling isolated. The findings indicate that these effects, though managed to some extent, and their persistence and longevity might critically affect teachers, teaching, and the learning process. These factors echo the findings of other scholars. For instance, mental health problems such as persistent or chronic stress affect lesson preparation, delivery and classroom management practices (Mwakasangula & Mwita, 2020; Singh & Gautam, 2024). Pre-service teachers have experienced physical symptoms such as headaches and fatigue, which affected their preparations and interests in teaching (Alvites-Huamani, 2019; Mbata, 2018), and poor lesson delivery due to the requirements of integrating technology, where some teachers still struggle (Fernández-Batanero et al., 2021; Çoklar & Yurdakul, 2017). As per the attachment theory, pre-service teachers feel insecure due to huge workloads, fear of using technology, being assessed, and a lack of cooperation. These premises affect the internal working model of these teachers and hence affect their working standards.

Pre-service Teachers' Resilience Mechanisms to Cope with Mental Health Problems

The data provide insights into the analysis of coping strategies employed by pre-service teachers to manage challenges during their teaching practice. Although six factors scored HI in the RII ranking (See Table 3), the findings show that the top three mainly used approach in coping with mental health problems among pre-service teachers were (1) a reflection to their teaching experiences for identifying areas for improvement, (2) maintaining positive attitude even when faced with difficult classroom situations and (3) setting realistic goals and manage expectations which helped reduce stress. The findings indicate pre-service teachers used self-tailored techniques in managing stress because they admitted to receiving little cooperation from experienced teachers on matters related to classroom teaching. The low-ranked factors included (10) seeking feedback from mentors or supervisors for improving teaching skills, (9) utilising stress-relief techniques before teaching, and (8) participating in professional development workshops or

training sessions during my practicum. The findings show that all factors in the school environments, such as inadequate collaboration and partnership between host teachers, student teachers and limited learning opportunities for teachers, had little support in reducing mental health problems. The attachment theory assumes that secure attachment is an inner resource that facilitates resilience, while insecure attachment causes vulnerability. This assumption implies that pre-service teachers who received supportive collaboration with experienced teachers and working environments tend to devise coping strategies for mental health resilience and vice versa.

Most (73%) of pre-service teachers do not actively seek feedback from their mentors or supervisors to improve their teaching skills, indicating a reluctance or lack of initiative. Only 16.7% agree with seeking feedback, suggesting that many may feel uncertain about approaching mentors or may not prioritise feedback as a coping strategy. A substantial majority (73.9%) engage in collaborative planning with fellow pre-service teachers to share resources, highlighting the importance of teamwork and peer support in managing challenges. The low disagreement percentage (12.5%) indicates that collaboration is a widely accepted and utilised strategy among pre-service teachers. These findings resonate with Mok and Staub (2021), who reported that coaching, mentoring and supervision matter for pre-service teachers to develop appropriate classroom instruction skills, including constructive feedback and collaborative lesson planning and teaching. In this context, lacking feedback and collaborative planning implies that pre-service teachers inadequately develop classroom instructional skills during teaching practice. Also, Mena et al. (2017) assert that mentorship is an encouraging role in absorbing shocks and stress these pre-service teachers encounter and ensures continued support that results in professional knowledge. Approximately 44.7% of respondents utilise stress-relief techniques such as deep breathing and mindfulness before teaching, suggesting that many recognise the importance of managing stress proactively. However, about one-third (33%) disagree, indicating that a significant number may not be familiar with or do not practice these techniques.

A majority (59.4%) prepare thoroughly for their lessons to feel more confident, indicating that preparation is a key coping strategy for many pre-service teachers to enhance their self-efficacy in the classroom. The low disagreement percentage (16.7%) suggests that respondents widely practice thorough preparation. An overwhelming majority (78.1%) maintain a positive attitude even when faced with difficult classroom situations, reflecting resilience and an optimistic approach to challenges among pre-service teachers. A significant majority (76%) reflect on

their teaching experiences to identify areas for improvement, indicating a strong commitment to self-assessment and growth among pre-service teachers. About half of the respondents (47.9%) reach out to friends or family for emotional support during challenging times, suggesting that social support networks play a crucial role in managing stress; however, nearly one-third disagree, indicating that some may not utilise these resources effectively, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Strategies for Enduring Mental Health Problems

SN	Statement	SD	A	N	D	SA	Total	RII	Rank	Status
		<i>f (%)</i>	<i>f (%)</i>	<i>f (%)</i>	<i>f (%)</i>	<i>f (%)</i>	<i>f (%)</i>			
	I actively seek feedback from my mentor or supervisor to improve my teaching skills	61 (63.5)	9 (9.4)	10 (10.4)	11 (11.4)	5 (5.2)	96 (100)	0.371	10	LI
	I engage in collaborative planning with fellow pre-service teachers to share resources	7 (7.3)	5 (5.2)	13 (13.5)	18 (18.8)	53 (55.2)	96 (100)	0.819	4	HI
	I utilise stress-relief techniques (e.g., deep breathing, mindfulness) before teaching	14 (14.6)	11 (11.4)	21 (21.9)	18 (18.8)	32 (33.3)	96 (100)	0.690	9	MI
	I prepare thoroughly for my lessons to feel more confident in front of my students.	10 (10.4)	6 (6.3)	11 (11.4)	18 (18.8)	51 (53.1)	96 (100)	0.796	5	HI
	I maintain a positive attitude even when faced with difficult classroom situations	5 (5.2)	4 (4.2)	12 (12.5)	17 (17.7)	58 (60.4)	96 (100)	0.848	2	HI
	I reflect on my teaching experiences to identify areas for improvement	3 (3.1)	4 (4.2)	16 (16.7)	16 (16.7)	57 (59.4)	96 (100)	0.85	1	HI
	I reach out to friends or family for emotional support during challenging times	11 (11.4)	8 (8.3)	15 (15.6)	24 (25.0)	38 (39.6)	96 (100)	0.746	7	MI
	I participate in professional development workshops or training sessions during my practicum.	9 (9.4)	6 (6.3)	22 (22.9)	27 (28.1)	32 (33.3)	96 (100)	0.739	8	MI
	I set realistic goals for myself to manage expectations and reduce stress	6 (6.3)	2 (2.1)	16 (16.7)	21 (21.9)	51 (53.1)	96 (100)	0.827	3	HI
	I use technology and online resources to enhance my teaching methods and strategies	15 (15.6)	5 (5.2)	9 (9.4)	20 (20.8)	47 (49.0)	96 (100)	0.765	6	HI
	Average							0.7451		MI

Source: Field data

Participation in professional development workshops is relatively low, with approximately equal percentages of agreement and disagreement around participation rates, indicating an area where more engagement could benefit skill enhancement and coping strategies. More than half of the respondents (approximately 53%) set realistic goals to manage expectations and reduce stress, demonstrating an effective coping strategy that helps maintain focus and reduces performance-related anxiety. Nearly half of the respondents (approximately 49%) use technology and online resources to enhance their teaching methods, indicating a proactive approach to leveraging available tools for effective teaching; however, about one-third express disagreement, suggesting some may struggle with technology integration. These observations are similar to Fernández-Batanero et al. (2021) and Çoklar and Yurdakul (2017), who found that novice teachers integrate technology in teaching to access materials, seek support or clarification that they could have received from experienced teachers. Nevertheless, due to poor cooperation, they rely on technology, though some have trouble due to a lack of enabling conditions like skills, internet access and devices.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study explored pre-service teachers' mental health problems and resilience mechanisms during teaching practice. The findings indicate an average of 20% of pre-service teachers experienced mental health problems that resulted from several factors, such as limited mentorship support from experienced teachers, inadequate teaching skills, fear of integrating technology in teaching and workload. These affected teachers' preparations and confidence in teaching, negatively influencing the teaching and learning process, leading to poor performance. These factors contribute to feelings of doubt and low self-efficacy, underscoring the need for enhanced training programs that focus on skill development and confidence building. The effects of this stress are multifaceted, leading to decreased concentration, ineffective lesson preparation, anxiety, and negative attitudes toward teaching. Such outcomes not only hinder the personal growth of pre-service teachers but also have implications for their future effectiveness as educators. Despite pre-service teachers devising a range of coping strategies, including collaboration with peers, engaging in stress-relieving techniques like exercise, intensive lesson preparation, and seeking emotional support, some teachers still experience mental health problems. These proactive measures reflect their efforts to navigate the complexities of their training environment and enhance their resilience. Linking these findings to attachment theory illustrates the

interconnectedness of personal beliefs, environmental influences, and behaviour. The findings imply that teacher-training institutions should strengthen microteaching and teaching practices, incorporating mental health support systems for pre-service teachers. This will ensure their well-being and career success by equipping them with coping strategies and resources to manage stress, anxiety, and other mental health problems encountered during teaching practice. In addition, the study supports the application of Attachment Theory (AT) in understanding pre-service teachers' mental health. Secure emotional attachments within the work environment (feeling safe, valued, and supported) correlate with better well-being. Further research can explore how fostering secure attachments in educational settings can improve resilience and reduce mental health problems among teachers.

The study recommends that teacher-training institutions integrate mental health training into teacher education curricula and devise mentorship programs to equip pre-service teachers with the knowledge and skills to identify and manage mental health problems in their work environment. Again, these institutions should develop clear guidelines and procedures that prioritise pre-service teachers' mental health during emergencies or crises. Regarding recommendations for practices, teacher-training institutions should strengthen microteaching sessions to allow pre-service teachers to experiment with lesson delivery and classroom management techniques and boost their self-confidence. They should also encourage pre-service teachers to collaborate with their peers and experienced teachers to share experiences, challenges, and coping strategies. To help pre-service teachers manage their stress levels, teacher-training institutions should organise sessions on stress management techniques such as exercise, meditation, and mindfulness.

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