



FROM STRESS TO SUCCESS: OVERCOMING MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES FOR TEACHERS WORKING WITH SLOW LEARNERS

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Abstract :

This study aims to analyze the mental health challenges faced by teachers teaching slow learners at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nurul Huda Bondowoso and identify effective strategies for addressing them. A qualitative case study approach was used, using in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of school policy documents. The results indicate that teachers face high levels of emotional distress and stress due to the demands of adapting teaching methods to students' individual needs. While the Madrasah provides emotional and psychological support through counseling services and stress management training, barriers to seeking psychological help remain, including stigma. Collaboration between teachers, parents, and specialists has been shown to improve teaching effectiveness and student well-being. Furthermore, the implementation of adaptive teaching methods plays a significant role in reducing teacher stress levels and increasing slow learner engagement and learning outcomes. In conclusion, holistic support encompassing emotional, social, and pedagogical aspects is necessary to maintain teacher mental health and improve the quality of inclusive education in Madrasahs.

Keywords: *Teacher Mental Health, Slow Learners, Emotional Support, School-Parent Collaboration, Adaptive Teaching Methods.*

INTRODUCTION

The mental health challenges faced by teachers working with slow learners are a critical issue in the context of education (Ramesh et al., 2023;). Teachers who teach students with learning difficulties often experience significant stress and emotional burden, which can impact their well-being and the quality of education provided (Muhajir et al., 2020; Schenzle & Schultz, 2024).

Teachers working with slow learners must face various challenges, including the need to adapt teaching methods, provide additional support, and address frustrations that may arise from slow student progress (Fitriana, Putri, Fajri, & Shoriah, 2024) (Mannila et al., 2023; Luo et al., 2023; Dwivedi et al., 2023). This emotional burden can lead to stress, exhaustion, and burnout, which can ultimately impact their motivation and teaching effectiveness. Addressing teachers' mental health challenges is crucial to ensuring that they can provide quality education and support optimal student development.

Previous research has shown that teachers experiencing high stress and burnout tend to have decreased teaching quality and negative interactions with

students (Ma & Liu, 2024). Chen et al., 2024, suggesting that social support and school-based interventions can reduce stress and improve teachers' mental well-being. Furthermore, data from Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nurul Huda shows that some teachers report high levels of stress related to teaching slow-learners, which impacts their well-being and teaching effectiveness (Le & Pham, 2024; Z. Luo & Li, 2024).

Addressing the mental health challenges faced by teachers at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nurul Huda requires an integrated and sustainable approach. This study aims to identify factors contributing to stress, assess the impact of teachers' mental health on teaching and student development, and develop and implement effective intervention strategies (Deroncele-Acosta et al., 2024; Kar & Sarkar, 2024). By understanding and addressing these challenges comprehensively, it is hoped that it will improve teacher well-being and, in turn, improve the quality of education for slow learner students (Hölscher et al., 2024; Alemu, 2024).

Teachers who teach slow learners often face high levels of stress due to the demands of adapting teaching methods and providing additional support. This poor mental health can lead to burnout and decreased teaching quality, negatively impacting interactions with students (Council & Boards, 2022; Sabatino & Szachnowicz, 2020). Research shows that stress experienced by teachers can reduce their motivation and decrease teaching effectiveness, resulting in a direct impact on student learning outcomes (Jean DeFeo et al., 2024; Sikström et al., 2024).

In many schools, including Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nurul Huda, systematic support for teacher mental health is often inadequate. The lack of support programs such as counseling, stress management training, and other facilities leaves teachers feeling isolated and lacking the tools to manage their stress. This exacerbates mental health issues and can impact teacher well-being and teaching effectiveness (Le & Pham, 2024; Z. Luo & Li, 2024).

Addressing teacher mental health challenges requires a holistic approach that encompasses emotional support, workload management, and improving the work environment (Alemu, 2024). Innovations in support strategies, such as developing stress management training programs and counseling sessions, have been shown to be effective in reducing stress and improving teacher well-being (Le & Pham, 2024). Comprehensive implementation of these strategies can help teachers better manage stress and improve the quality of their teaching (Mannila et al., 2023).

Supportive leadership committed to teacher well-being also plays a key role in addressing these challenges (Z. Luo & Li, 2024). Proactive leadership in providing support and resources can create a healthy school culture and increase teacher motivation and job satisfaction. This approach is expected to improve teacher well-being and positively impact the development of slow-learning students (Muhajir et al., 2020).

There are several studies related to the title studied, including the title English teachers' attitudes towards learners: Effects on the rural pedagogies in Bangladesh written by Mili Saha. The results show that these teachers have positive attitudes towards English learners in rural areas, which is a strong predictor of their pedagogical choices and actions. However, their beliefs and perceptions are not always translated into practice. The main challenges include stakeholder insincerity, teacher shortages, inadequate technology and resources, and additional teacher duties that affect ELL support. Needs-based strategic planning is needed to prepare teachers to consider the special language and

instructional needs of economically disadvantaged students (Saha, 2023). The International Conference on Teaching and Learning English as an Additional Language written by GlobELT The results show (Jones et al., 2024)

This study proposes an approach that integrates holistic and individualized strategies to address teacher mental health. While previous research has often focused on specific aspects such as social support or school-based interventions, this study will develop a strategy that simultaneously encompasses emotional support, workload management, and improved work environments. This approach aims to provide a more comprehensive and coordinated solution.

Many studies have examined teacher mental health in general or in the context of work stress. However, this study specifically highlights the mental health challenges faced by teachers working with students with learning disabilities. The study includes an in-depth analysis of how students' learning difficulties impact teachers' stress levels and how support can be tailored to meet the specific needs of this group.

This study aims to develop and implement a specially designed intervention program to support teachers in teaching students with learning disabilities (slow learners). The program includes personalized stress management training, counseling sessions, and a peer support system that focuses on the unique challenges faced by teachers. This study will also measure the program's effectiveness through a structured and rigorous evaluation method. How to Address Mental Health Challenges of Teachers Working with Slow Learners at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nurul Huda, Bondowoso.

METHOD

This research design uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to explore in-depth the mental health challenges faced by teachers who teach slow learners. The research will involve in-depth interviews with teachers from several schools that have special programs for slow learners, as well as classroom observations to understand the dynamics of teaching and interactions between teachers and students. The collected data will be analyzed using thematic analysis techniques to identify key patterns in teachers' experiences and the strategies they use to overcome these challenges. Furthermore, this research will include document analysis related to school policies and existing support programs to assess the contribution of external factors to teachers' mental health. The findings of this study are expected to provide practical recommendations for the development of more effective support programs for teachers.

This study uses various data collection methods, including observation, interviews, and document studies. The observational component includes direct observation, documenting events, occurrences, and activities at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nurul Huda Nogosari to obtain data related to the source of information for this study includes in-depth interviews with teachers who teach slow learner students to understand their experiences and mental health challenges, as well as direct observation in the classroom to evaluate interactions between teachers and students and the teaching strategies implemented. In addition, an analysis of school policy documents and support programs will be conducted to assess external factors that affect teacher mental health. This research will also reference relevant literature on teacher mental health, teaching students with special needs, and relevant interventions to support understanding and develop effective recommendations. Data collection for this research will

involve in-depth interviews with teachers who teach slow learners, direct classroom observations to understand teaching dynamics, and analysis of policy documents and school support programs. Interviews aim to explore teachers' mental health experiences and challenges, while classroom observations provide insights into teaching interactions and strategies. School documents will be analyzed to assess external factors affecting teacher well-being. The collected data will be analyzed to identify key patterns and findings relevant to the research objectives.

Informant Table 1.1

No	NAMA INFORMAN	STATUS	KODE
1	MUSTOFA	PRINCIPAL OF MADRASAH	HS
2	ZEIN FAUZI, s.Pd	VICE PRINCIPAL	ap
3	SUHRIYANTO, S.Pd	TEACHER	tc

Data analysis in this study will be conducted using a qualitative approach using narrative analysis techniques. Data from in-depth interviews will be transcribed and coded to identify key themes related to teachers' mental health experiences and challenges. Classroom observations will be analyzed to understand the dynamics of teacher-student interactions and the effectiveness of teaching strategies. Policy documents and support programs will be analyzed to evaluate the contribution of external factors to teachers' mental health. Findings from each data source will be combined and compared to generate comprehensive insights into the challenges faced and strategies used, as well as to formulate practical recommendations that can be applied in educational contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Emotional and Psychological Support

At Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nurul Huda Bondowoso, emotional and psychological support for teachers is a top priority in creating a holistic and sustainable educational environment. Recognizing the challenges educators face, particularly in dealing with students with special needs such as slow learners, the school has initiated various programs to ensure the mental well-being of teachers. Through counseling services, support groups, and specialized training focused on stress management and work-life balance, Madrasah Nurul Huda is committed to providing comprehensive support to teachers, enabling them to carry out their teaching duties more calmly and effectively. These efforts not only strengthen teachers' capacity to face daily challenges but also contribute to creating a more positive and inclusive learning atmosphere for all students.

This was conveyed by the Principal, who stated that the teachers, who have been teaching at the school for several years, stated that "the emotional and psychological support provided by the school has been very helpful in facing the challenges of teaching, especially when dealing with slow-learning students." Most teachers felt that the school had paid sufficient attention to their mental well-being. One teacher said, "I feel heard and cared for. The school is always open if we need counseling or just to talk about problems we face in class." (HS_1).

Furthermore, observations showed that the work environment at this school appears supportive and familial. Teachers appear to help each other, both with their work and by providing moral support. This is reflected in the warm and collaborative daily interactions. Furthermore, the counseling room provided appears comfortable and designed to provide privacy for teachers who need it. However, during observations, this room appeared to be infrequently used, indicating that there may still be a stigma or discomfort felt by teachers when seeking psychological help.

Based on the Madrasah Principal's statement and observations, it can be concluded that Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nurul Huda Bondowoso has successfully created an environment that supports the emotional and psychological well-being of teachers, particularly in addressing the challenges of teaching slow learners. Teachers feel heard and cared for, reflecting a positive relationship between the madrasah management and educators. This demonstrates that the madrasah places sufficient emphasis on teacher mental health, as reflected in supportive facilities and policies.

However, although facilities such as counseling rooms have been provided with adequate comfort and privacy, the relatively infrequent use of these rooms suggests psychological barriers that may not have been fully addressed. The persistent stigma or discomfort surrounding seeking psychological help indicates a need for increased awareness and openness regarding mental health among teachers. While the work environment at the madrasah is already familial and collaborative, further steps may be needed to ensure that all teachers feel comfortable and encouraged to utilize available psychological support.

Emotional and psychological support for teachers in educational settings has been a significant focus in educational psychology literature (Tseer et al., 2024; Shankland et al., 2024). According to (Holzer et al., 2024; Katz & Moè, 2024), teacher mental health directly impacts teaching effectiveness and student well-being. Teachers who feel emotionally and psychologically supported tend to have better well-being, which in turn positively impacts the classroom learning environment. Another study by (Massachusetts, 2018) showed that when teachers feel heard and valued, they are better able to cope with work stress and demonstrate a higher commitment to supporting student development, including those with special needs such as slow learners. This is in line with findings at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nurul Huda Bondowoso, where teachers felt they received sufficient attention and support from the school, which was reflected in collaborative and familial daily interactions.

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Collaboration with Parents and Specialists

At Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nurul Huda Bondowoso, collaboration between teachers, parents, and specialists is a key pillar in supporting student development, especially those requiring special attention, such as slow learners. The school recognizes that achieving optimal educational outcomes requires the active involvement of all stakeholders. Through open communication and close collaboration between teachers and parents, challenges in the learning process can be identified and addressed more effectively. Furthermore, the school actively engages specialists, such as educational psychologists and learning consultants, to provide guidance and tailored strategies that can help students reach their full potential. This collaborative approach not only enhances the effectiveness of classroom instruction but also creates a supportive and inclusive environment for all students.

Based on interviews with teachers, it was found that teachers at this madrasah emphasize the importance of collaboration with parents in supporting student development, especially slow learners. One teacher stated, "Collaboration with parents really helps us understand the students' backgrounds. This allows us to adjust our teaching methods to better suit their needs."

This data was supported by the researchers' field observations. During the observations, it was clear that the interaction between teachers and parents was very good. At regular meetings held by the madrasah, parents actively asked questions and provided input regarding their children's development. These meetings took place in an open and friendly atmosphere, with a focus on the students' needs.

Interviews and observations at the Nurul Huda Bondowoso Elementary School (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah) indicate that collaboration between teachers and parents plays a key role in supporting student development, especially slow learners. Teachers at this school strongly emphasize the importance of working with parents, which allows them to better understand students' backgrounds and specific needs. With information gathered from parents, teachers can adapt teaching methods to better suit individual student characteristics, which in turn increases the effectiveness of the learning process.

Field observations corroborate these interview findings, showing that interactions between teachers and parents appear to occur in a positive atmosphere. Regular meetings held by the school demonstrate open and supportive communication. Parents actively participate, ask questions, and provide input regarding their children's development. The friendly atmosphere and focus on student needs reflect a harmonious relationship between teachers and parents. This collaboration not only enriches the classroom learning process but also creates an inclusive and responsive environment to the needs of each student, especially those who require more attention.

This interpretation indicates that Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nurul Huda Bondowoso has successfully built an educational ecosystem that supports holistic student development by involving parents as active partners in the educational process.

Collaboration between teachers and parents in education has been widely recognized as a crucial factor contributing to student success, especially for those with special learning needs, such as slow learners. Vollmer (2024), in his theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence, emphasized that parental involvement in a child's education creates an overlapping influence between home and school, which strengthens support for student development. According to Epstein, when

schools and families collaborate in education, student learning outcomes tend to be more positive due to the synergy in supporting their academic and emotional needs. Findings from Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nurul Huda Bondowoso, which demonstrate strong collaboration between teachers and parents in supporting slow learners, align with this view, where communication and active parental involvement enable teachers to adapt teaching approaches more effectively.

This can be seen in the following table, Table 1.2

Interaction between Teachers and Parents at Nurul Huda Bondowoso Elementary School

Types of Interaction	Frequency	Description	The main purpose
Regular Parent-Teacher Meetings	Monthly	Formal meetings between teachers and parents to discuss students' academic and behavioral progress.	Evaluating and adjusting learning strategies
Individual Consultations	As Needed	Consultation sessions between teachers and parents tailored to the specific needs of each student.	Providing individualized support for students
WhatsApp Group Communication	Daily/Weekly	Informal communication through chat groups to share information and updates on school activities.	Ensuring prompt and efficient communication
Student Progress Reports	Quarterly	Written reports submitted to parents regarding students' academic and social progress.	Regularly monitoring student progress
Joint Activities (Workshops/Seminars)	Semesterly	Activities involving parents in workshops or seminars to discuss educational topics.	Increasing parental involvement in education
Classroom Observations by Parents	On Demand	Parents are permitted to observe classroom activities to better understand teaching methods and student interactions.	Increasing parental understanding of the student's learning environment

Another relevant study is research by (Kovács et al., 2024) and Aurora et al., 2024), which found that parental involvement was directly related to improved academic achievement and positive attitudes toward school. They

emphasized that collaboration between schools and parents creates a climate conducive to learning, where students feel supported both at home and at school. In the context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nurul Huda, parents' active participation in regular meetings and discussions with teachers demonstrates a strong commitment from both parties to ensuring optimal student development, especially those requiring more specialized learning approaches. This literature supports the finding that open and friendly interactions between teachers and parents can strengthen school-family relationships, ultimately improving student well-being and achievement.

This literature review underscores the importance of collaboration between teachers and parents in education, particularly in the context of managing slow learners. Existing research shows that parental involvement not only improves academic outcomes but also helps create a more inclusive and supportive environment for students. This reinforces findings from Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nurul Huda Bondowoso, where effective collaboration between teachers and parents has been shown to positively contribute to student development.

This research provides empirical evidence of the importance of strong collaboration between teachers and parents in supporting the development of slow learners. These findings contribute by identifying best practices that can be adopted by madrasahs or other schools to strengthen school-family relationships, particularly in the context of inclusive education. This effective collaboration model can serve as a guideline for developing better communication and parent engagement strategies.

This research reveals that parental involvement allows teachers to better understand students' individual needs and adapt teaching methods. This contribution is significant because it expands the literature on instructional differentiation and how information from parents can be used to design more personalized and effective educational strategies. This supports a more adaptive approach to addressing students with diverse learning needs.

Implementation of Adaptive Teaching Methods

Teachers' mental health is a crucial aspect in supporting the effectiveness of the learning process, especially when they are faced with slow-learning students. The challenges teachers face in managing students with special learning needs can significantly impact their mental well-being. Therefore, it is important to explore adaptive teaching methods as a solution to address these challenges.

This interview included questions that led the interviewees to discuss challenges, the impact on mental health, and the solutions they found through the implementation of adaptive teaching methods. "My main challenge is adapting my teaching methods to the individual needs of each slow-learning student. They require extra attention and a varied approach, which often leaves me feeling overwhelmed and stressed." (informant 3)

This is reinforced by field observations, which clearly corroborate the interview findings, indicating that adaptive teaching methods are effective in addressing the challenges faced by teachers in teaching slow learners. Observations indicate that the variety of assignments and project-based approaches mentioned in the interviews are indeed well implemented in the classroom. This provides evidence that these methods are not only theoretical concepts but also successfully applied in practice. Interpretation of the observation and interview results indicates that adaptive teaching methods serve as an effective solution to the challenges faced by teachers in educating slow

learners. These methods not only help reduce stress and improve teachers' mental well-being but also contribute to increased student engagement and progress. This underscores the importance of implementing adaptive methods in education, especially in classroom contexts that require special attention, such as teaching slow learners.

Adaptive Teaching Indicators

Indicator	Description	Purpose of Measurement
Student Engagement	The level of student participation in class activities, including responding to assignments, participating in discussions, and enthusiasm for learning.	Measuring how actively students are engaged in learning.
Conceptual Understanding	The level of student understanding of the material taught, assessed through test results, assignments, and ongoing evaluations.	Assessing the effectiveness of adaptive teaching methods in improving learning outcomes.
Assignment Appropriateness to Ability	The extent to which assigned assignments are tailored to students' individual abilities and needs.	Ensuring that adaptive teaching methods are implemented appropriately for each student.
Use of Educational Technology	The frequency and manner in which technology is used to support adaptive learning, such as learning software or visual aids.	Measuring the extent to which technology supports adaptive teaching methods.
Teacher Satisfaction	The level of teacher satisfaction with the teaching methods used, measured through surveys or interviews.	Assessing the impact of adaptive teaching methods on teacher well-being and motivation.
Teacher Stress	The level of teacher stress, assessed through surveys or observations, especially in the context of teaching slow learners.	Measuring the impact of adaptive teaching methods on teacher mental health.
Student Progress	Positive changes in students' academic achievement and personal development after implementing adaptive teaching methods.	Assessing the final outcomes of implementing adaptive teaching methods.
Teaching Flexibility	The extent to which teachers are able to adapt teaching methods to individual student needs.	Assessing teachers' ability to implement adaptive teaching.

Teacher-Student Interaction	The quality and frequency of interactions between teachers and students during the implementation of adaptive teaching methods.	Measuring the impact of adaptive teaching methods on interpersonal relationships in the classroom.
Support from School Management	The level of support provided by school management in implementing adaptive teaching methods, including training and resources.	Assessing the supportive environment for teachers to implement adaptive teaching methods.

Adaptive teaching methods have become an important focus in modern education, especially when dealing with students with special needs, such as slow learners. Adaptive teaching refers to learning strategies tailored to individual students' needs, abilities, and learning styles (Tomlinson, 2020; Goosen & Steenkamp, 2023; Goosen & Steenkamp, 2023). This approach differs from traditional, often uniform teaching by striving to provide flexibility in material delivery, assignment types, and assessments tailored to the student.

Various studies have shown that implementing adaptive teaching methods can improve student engagement and learning outcomes. According to Hallahan et al. (2020), slow learner students who receive adaptive teaching tend to show significant improvements in conceptual understanding and classroom engagement. Adaptive teaching often involves the use of educational technology, curriculum modifications, and the provision of differentiated tasks according to the student's ability level (Le & Pham, 2024; Iu et al., 2024; Anderson, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Nurul Huda Bondowoso Elementary School prioritizes emotional and psychological support for teachers, which is essential for creating an inclusive and holistic educational environment. The collaborative and family-like working environment at this school helps teachers navigate the challenges of teaching, especially slow-learning students. Although counseling facilities are available, utilization remains low, suggesting a stigma or discomfort with seeking psychological help. Therefore, further efforts are needed to address stigma and raise awareness of the importance of mental health among teachers. Strong collaboration between teachers and parents has also proven effective in supporting student development. The holistic support model implemented at this school could serve as a model for other educational institutions.

The findings of the discussion at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nurul Huda Bondowoso provide an important contribution to the context of Joyce Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence theory. These findings emphasize the importance of collaboration between schools and families in supporting students, especially slow learners. Emotional and psychological support for teachers also expands this theory by adding the dimension of teacher well-being as a key element in creating a holistic educational environment. Furthermore, this study identifies a new challenge in the form of stigma against psychological support services, indicating the need for further interventions to create inclusive and accessible support.

This study has several important limitations. First, the limited focus on a

single madrasah in Bondowoso limits the ability to generalize the results to other educational contexts with different characteristics. Second, the use of qualitative methods such as interviews and observations may be influenced by the subjectivity of respondents and researchers, as well as the lack of supporting quantitative data. Furthermore, the short time period in which data was collected may not reflect the long-term dynamics at the madrasah. The study also did not deeply explore the stigma associated with the use of psychological services, which may hinder the utilization of available support. Community engagement beyond school and family relationships was also underexplored, thus under-exploring a crucial aspect of the Overlapping Spheres of Influence theory. Finally, because this study was specific to a single madrasah, generalizing the findings to other institutions should be done with caution, given that each school has unique dynamics that may influence the implementation of support strategies.

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