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Assessing the Competence and Challenges of Junior High School Teachers in Dapitan City National High School, Schools Division of Dapitan City

Lydia I. Kilapkilap, MAEM
Teacher, Department of Education, Dapitan City, Philippines

Leo C. Naparota, PhD
Dean, College of Arts and Sciences and School of Criminal Justice Education, Andres Bonifacio College, Inc., Dipolog City, Philippines

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ABSTRACT: This study aimed to determine the competence and challenges encountered of Junior High School teachers in Dapitan City National High School and its extension Schools during the school year 2026-2027. A descriptive-correlational survey design was employed with 131 teachers. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using weighted means, standard deviations, and Spearman's rank-order correlation at the 0.05 significance level. Respondents rated their overall competence as Highly Competent (WM = 4.56, SD = 0.49) and their professional challenges as Slightly Challenging (WM = 2.21, SD = 1.04). Content knowledge and pedagogy received the highest competence rating and the highest challenge rating, whereas diversity of learners received the lowest competence rating. Perceived competence was moderately and negatively correlated with perceived challenges ($\rho = -0.311$, $p = 0.001$). Thus, teachers who reported higher competence tended to report fewer challenges. The findings support targeted professional learning in inclusive instruction and content-specific pedagogy, together with mentoring and appropriate instructional resources. Because the study relied on self-reports and a correlational design, the results describe perceptions and associations rather than demonstrated teaching performance or causal effects.

KEYWORDS: perceived teacher competence, challenges encountered, junior high school teachers, professional development, Dapitan City National High School, Dapitan City, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Teacher competence is a vital component of quality education because it reflects teachers' capacity to apply professional knowledge, pedagogical skills, classroom management strategies, assessment practices, and appropriate professional attributes in facilitating meaningful student learning. At the junior high school level, teachers are expected to address learners' diverse academic, developmental, and social needs while implementing the curriculum effectively and maintaining a supportive classroom environment. König et al. (2021) established that teachers' general pedagogical knowledge and classroom management expertise significantly predicted instructional quality and contributed to students' academic progress in lower secondary classrooms. In the Philippine context, Balabal and Canuto (2026) assessed the teaching competencies of 65 public elementary school teachers in Ifugao across professionalism, teaching effectiveness, instructional planning, classroom management, and adaptability, illustrating the multidimensional nature of teacher competence. Although their study focused on elementary teachers, these areas provide relevant context for examining professional competence at other educational levels. Laguatan and Abad (2019) found that junior high school teachers demonstrated evident professional knowledge, professional practice, and professional attributes, although limitations were observed in conducting and disseminating classroom-based research. Together, these studies highlight the importance of assessing junior high school teachers' competence to identify professional strengths and areas for improvement and provide a sound basis for relevant training and professional development programs.

Junior high school teachers play a crucial role in developing learners' knowledge, skills, values, and readiness for higher levels of education; however, fulfilling this responsibility involves various professional and instructional challenges. These may include addressing diverse learner needs and behaviors, maintaining student participation, implementing curriculum requirements, preparing and assessing learning activities, integrating technology, handling administrative duties, and working with limited instructional resources. In the United States, García and Weiss (2019) reported that challenging working conditions, including limited administrative support, barriers to student learning, safety concerns, and restricted classroom autonomy, were associated with teacher dissatisfaction and decisions to leave the profession. Similarly, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2020) identified excessive administrative work as a major source of teacher stress across participating education systems, highlighting the importance of supportive working conditions. In the Philippine context, Lansangan et al. (2022) found that junior high school teachers experienced challenges involving internet connectivity, limited learner participation, time constraints, feedback provision, and adapting subject-specific activities to virtual instruction. Collado et al. (2021) likewise described Filipino teachers' transition to online teaching during the pandemic as both an opportunity for professional growth and a substantial challenge in fulfilling their teaching responsibilities. Although the two Philippine studies focused on pandemic-related teaching conditions, they provide relevant evidence of

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the difficulties teachers encounter when adapting instructional practices to changing demands. Assessing the challenges encountered by junior high school teachers is therefore essential for identifying barriers to their work and informing appropriate school policies, professional development programs, resource allocation, and institutional support.

Teachers' professional competence does not necessarily eliminate the challenges they encounter in practice. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2020) identified excessive administrative work as a major source of teacher stress, illustrating how workplace demands can complicate teachers' professional responsibilities. In the Philippine context, Lansangan et al. (2022) found that junior high school teachers reported high confidence in several aspects of virtual teaching while continuing to encounter technical and logistical difficulties, limited student engagement, and time constraints. Similarly, Collado et al. (2021) described Filipino teachers' transition to online instruction during the pandemic as both an opportunity for professional growth and a substantial challenge in fulfilling their duties. Although these Philippine studies focused on virtual instruction, they demonstrate that professional confidence and opportunities for growth can coexist with instructional difficulties. These findings support examining teachers' perceived competence alongside the challenges they encounter to identify appropriate professional development and institutional support.

The competence and challenges of Junior High School teachers are closely related because teachers' knowledge, pedagogical skills, classroom management abilities, technological proficiency, and professional attitudes influence how effectively they respond to instructional and workplace difficulties. Keller-Schneider et al. (2020) emphasized that teachers at different career stages perceive competence and challenges as interconnected, where higher competence levels enable teachers to manage difficulties more effectively, while persistent challenges limit opportunities for professional growth. Insorio (2024) found that teachers' challenges were associated with limited competence, insufficient time, financial constraints, and inadequate support from learners and parents, indicating that competency gaps may intensify the difficulties teachers experience in performing professional responsibilities. Similarly, Cadiente et al. (2026) reported that teachers demonstrated only moderate competence in research-related tasks while also experiencing moderate challenges involving insufficient training, limited resources, heavy teaching workloads, data-gathering difficulties, and inadequate institutional support.

Although previous studies have examined teachers' professional competence and the challenges, they encounter in areas such as instructional delivery, classroom management, technology integration, assessment, workload, and access to resources, limited research has simultaneously assessed these two variables among Junior High School teachers within a specific public secondary school context. Many existing studies were conducted in broader educational settings or focused on only one aspect of competence or one category of teaching challenge, leaving insufficient localized evidence on how teachers' competencies relate to the difficulties they experience in performing their professional responsibilities. In Dapitan City National High School, Schools Division of Dapitan City, there remains a need to determine the teachers' level of competence, identify the challenges they commonly encounter, and examine whether a significant relationship exists between these variables. Addressing this gap can provide school-based evidence for developing targeted professional development programs, strengthening administrative support, improving resource provision, and designing interventions responsive to the actual needs of Junior High School teachers.

LITERATURE

Competence

Teacher competence is a multidimensional concept that includes professional knowledge, pedagogical skills, beliefs, motivation, attitudes, and the capacity to make appropriate decisions in different classroom situations. Guerriero (2017) explained that competent teaching requires a strong and continuously updated knowledge base that enables teachers to respond to complex educational expectations, diverse learners, and changing instructional demands. In the same manner, Weyers et al. (2026) emphasized that professional competence involves dispositions, such as knowledge and motivation, as well as situation-specific skills, including recognizing classroom events, interpreting learners' needs, making instructional decisions, and planning effective lessons. These perspectives indicate that teacher competence extends beyond subject mastery because it also involves applying professional knowledge and personal qualities to actual teaching situations.

Challenges Encountered

Challenges encountered by teachers refer to the instructional, administrative, technological, and personal difficulties that may interfere with the effective performance of their professional responsibilities. Kim (2019) explained that excessive administrative duties reduce the time available for essential instructional activities, including lesson preparation and the provision of meaningful feedback to students. Similarly, Jomuad et al. (2021) found that teachers experienced high levels of workload and burnout, with workload significantly influencing both burnout and work performance. These findings indicate that paperwork, reporting requirements, additional school assignments, time pressure, and overlapping responsibilities may limit teachers' capacity to concentrate on instructional planning and classroom teaching. Addressing workload-related challenges requires fair task distribution, sufficient preparation time, and administrative systems that allow teachers to prioritize teaching and learner support.

Content Knowledge And Pedagogy

Content knowledge and pedagogy constitute a major area of teacher competence because effective instruction requires both mastery of the subject matter and the ability to present it in ways that learners can understand. Guerriero (2017) explained that teachers need a broad professional knowledge base, including subject content, teaching methods, learner development, curriculum, and assessment, to make informed decisions in complex classroom situations. Neumann et al. (2019) likewise described pedagogical content knowledge as the integration of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge that enables teachers to select suitable explanations, representations, examples, and learning activities for particular topics. For Junior High School teachers, competence in this area involves understanding curriculum content, connecting lessons across learning areas, applying research-based teaching principles, and adjusting instruction according to students' learning needs.

Learning Environment and Diversity Of Learners

Learning environment and diversity of learners are essential dimensions of teacher competence because students differ in their abilities, interests, socioeconomic backgrounds, cultures, languages, learning profiles, and educational needs. Forghani-Arani et al. (2019) explained that

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teachers working in diverse classrooms need relevant knowledge, skills, values, empathy, reflective capacity, professional autonomy, and pedagogical judgment to respond appropriately to students' varying circumstances. Similarly, Kefallinou et al. (2020) emphasized that inclusive education requires schools and teachers to remove barriers that prevent learners from participating meaningfully in educational activities. Junior high school teachers must create safe, respectful, equitable, and learner-centered classrooms where individual differences are recognized as valuable resources rather than obstacles to learning.

Curriculum And Planning Assessment and Reporting

Curriculum and planning are essential aspects of teacher competence because they guide the selection of learning objectives, subject content, instructional strategies, resources, activities, and appropriate time allotments. Cordingley et al. (2019) emphasized that effective curriculum implementation requires close alignment among curriculum standards, teaching practices, learning materials, and assessment activities, with teachers playing a central role in transforming prescribed curriculum requirements into meaningful classroom experiences. Green (2022) likewise described curriculum as a practice shaped by teachers' professional interpretations, decisions, interactions, and responses to actual classroom conditions. These perspectives indicate that Junior High School teachers must understand curriculum standards, formulate attainable learning objectives, prepare developmentally appropriate lesson plans, and adjust instructional activities according to learners' needs and available resources.

Community Linkages and Professional Engagement

Community linkages and professional engagement are important dimensions of teacher competence because education is strengthened when teachers establish meaningful relationships with families, community members, organizations, and other educational stakeholders. Salter and Halbert (2019) explained that teachers must be not only classroom-ready but also community-ready, possessing the relational understanding and skills needed to recognize learners' lived experiences and broader social contexts. Similarly, Daniel et al. (2019) emphasized that strong family and community engagement allows schools to incorporate local knowledge, resources, experiences, and support services into teaching and school decision-making. These perspectives indicate that Junior High School teachers should communicate respectfully with stakeholders, participate in community-based activities, and build partnerships that support relevant instruction, learner development, educational equity, and school improvement.

Personal Growth and Professional Development

Personal growth and professional development are essential components of teacher competence because they involve the continuous improvement of teachers' knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, professional identity, and commitment to effective teaching. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) described professional development as structured professional learning that produces changes in teachers' knowledge and instructional practices and contributes to improved student outcomes. Zhao (2022) explained that teachers' professional identity and well-being influence their motivation, commitment, adaptability, and willingness to engage in continuous professional learning. Personal growth enables Junior High School teachers to reflect on their strengths and limitations, establish professional goals, strengthen ethical practices, and remain responsive to changes in learners' needs, curriculum requirements, and educational policies.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1. Part I highlights the independent variable, competence which is measured through the following domains, namely: content knowledge and pedagogy; learning environment ; Diversity of Learners; curriculum and planning; Assessment and Reporting; community linkages and professional engagement; and personal growth and professional development. Part II presents the dependent variable, Challenges Encountered, which is assessed using the same five domains, namely: content knowledge and pedagogy; learning environment and diversity of learners; curriculum and planning assessment and reporting; community linkages and professional engagement; and personal growth and professional development.

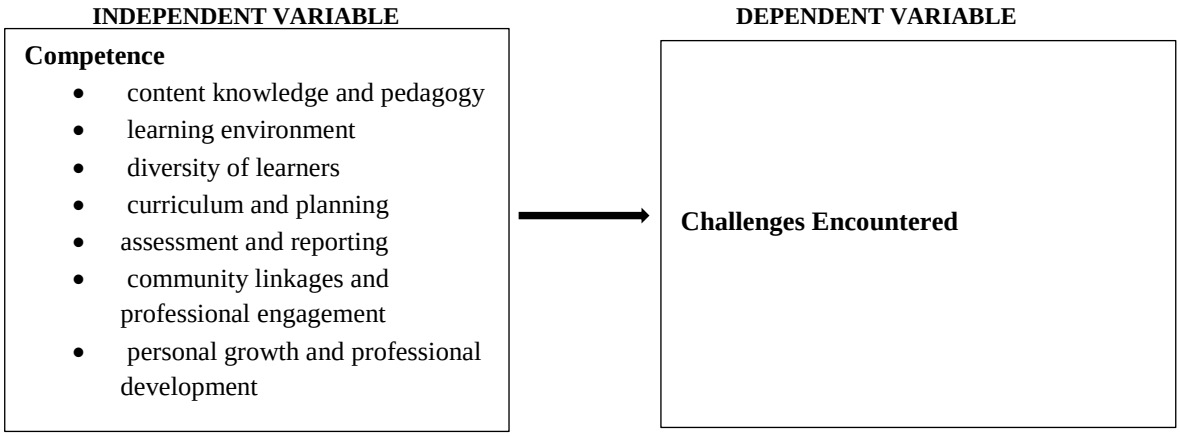


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the competence and challenges encountered of Junior High School teachers in Dapitan City National High School and its extension Schools during the school year 2026-2027.

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Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the respondents' perceived level of competence in terms of:
1.1 content knowledge and pedagogy;
1.2 learning environment ;
1.3 Diversity of Learners;
1.4 curriculum and planning;
1.5 Assessment and Reporting;
1.6 community linkages and professional engagement; and
1.7 personal growth and professional development?
2. What is the respondents' perceived level of Challenges Encountered?
3. Is there a significant relationship between respondents' perceived level of competence and respondents' perceived level of challenges encountered?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between respondents' perceived level of competence and respondents' perceived level of challenges encountered.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Method Used

A descriptive-correlational survey design was used to describe teachers' perceived competence and professional challenges and examine the association between them. The study involved 131 teachers. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire without manipulating either variable. Survey research provides a structured approach to collecting comparable responses, while correlational research examines relationships without experimental manipulation (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Hellevik, 2019).

Research Instrument

The questionnaire comprised two scales adopted from Ramos and Cabrera (2026). Part I, the Competence Scale, assessed seven domains: content knowledge and pedagogy; learning environment; diversity of learners; curriculum and planning; assessment and reporting; community linkages and professional engagement; and personal growth and professional development. Part II, the Challenges Encountered Scale, assessed five domains: content knowledge and pedagogy; learning environment and diversity of learners; curriculum and planning, assessment and reporting; community linkages and professional engagement; and personal growth and professional development. The two scales therefore addressed related professional responsibilities using different domain groupings.

Ethical Consideration

Approval was obtained from the Research and Ethics Committee of the Department of Education before data collection. Institutional permission and respondents' informed consent were secured before participation. The questionnaire used clear language to support informed, voluntary participation. Respondents' identities were kept anonymous, and the information collected was treated as confidential. Only essential research data were retained for academic and future research purposes.

Statistical Treatment of the Data

Presented below are the statistical tools utilized in the treatment and analysis of the data gathered.

Weighted Mean. This is used to quantify the respondents' ratings on the competence and challenges encountered.

Scoring Procedure

Competence

Scale	Range of Mean	Description	Interpretation
5	4.500–5.000	Outstanding	Highly Competent
4	3.500–4.499	Very Satisfactory	Very Competent
3	2.500–3.499	Satisfactory	Competent
2	1.500–2.499	Unsatisfactory	Less Competent
1	1.000–1.499	Poor	Not Competent

Challenges Encountered

Scale	Range of Mean	Description	Interpretation
5	4.21–5.00	Extremely Challenging	Challenges are experienced to a very great extent
4	3.41–4.20	Very Challenging	Challenges are experienced to a great extent
3	2.61–3.40	Moderately Challenging	Challenges are experienced to a moderate extent
2	1.81–2.60	Slightly Challenging	Challenges are experienced to a slight extent
1	1.00–1.80	Not Challenging at All	Challenges are not experienced

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Standard Deviation. This is used to determine the homogeneity and heterogeneity of the respondents' score, where SD ≤ 3 is homogenous and SD > 3 is heterogeneous Aiken & Susane (2001); Refugio et al. (2019).

Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient (Spearman rho). This is used to determine the correlation between competence and challenges encountered. The following guide in interpreting the correlation value proposed by Cohen et al. (2014) was utilized in this study:

Value	Size	Interpretation
±0.50 to ±1.00	Large	High positive/negative correlation
±0.30 to ±.49	Medium	Moderate positive/negative correlation
±0.10 to ±0.29	Small	Low positive/negative correlation
±0.01 to ±0.09	Negligible	Slight positive/negative correlation
	0.0	**No correlation**

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The data are presented following the statement of the problems of the current study. The study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the respondents' perceived level of competence in terms of:

1.1 content knowledge and pedagogy;
1.2 learning environment ;
1.3 Diversity of Learners;
1.4 curriculum and planning;
1.5 Assessment and Reporting;
1.6 community linkages and professional engagement; and
1.7 personal growth and professional development?

Table 1: Summary of Respondents' perceived level of Competence.

Statements	AWV	SD	Description	Interpretation
A. Content Knowledge and Pedagogy	4.62	0.46	Outstanding	Highly Competent
B. Learning Environment	4.59	0.48	Outstanding	Highly Competent
C. Diversity of Learners	4.46	0.61	Very Satisfactory	Very Competent
D. Curriculum and Planning	4.55	0.57	Outstanding	Highly Competent
E. Assessment and Reporting	4.55	0.58	Outstanding	Highly Competent
F. Community Linkages and Professional Engagement	4.58	0.57	Outstanding	Highly Competent
G. Personal Growth and Professional Development	4.60	0.58	Outstanding	Highly Competent
Overall	**4.56**	**0.49**	**Outstanding**	**Highly Competent**

AWV-Average Weighted Value, SD-Standard Deviation

Table 1 presents the summary of the respondents' perceived level of competence across the seven domains. The findings reveal an overall AWV of 4.56 with an SD of 0.49, described as Outstanding and interpreted as Highly Competent. Among the domains, Content Knowledge and Pedagogy obtained the highest rating with an AWV of 4.62 (SD = 0.46), followed by Personal Growth and Professional Development with 4.60 (SD = 0.58), Learning Environment with 4.59 (SD = 0.48), and Community Linkages and Professional Engagement with 4.58 (SD = 0.57). Both Curriculum and Planning and Assessment and Reporting obtained an AWV of 4.55, while Diversity of Learners registered the lowest rating with an AWV of 4.46 (SD = 0.61) and was interpreted as Very Competent. This means that the respondents generally perceive themselves as possessing a high level of professional competence across the major domains of teaching, with particular strength in content knowledge and pedagogy. Nevertheless, competence in addressing the diversity of learners emerged as the comparatively weakest area and therefore presents the greatest opportunity for further professional enhancement. This implies that the Junior High School teachers are generally well-equipped to perform their instructional and professional responsibilities, but professional development initiatives may give additional emphasis to differentiated instruction, inclusive education, culturally responsive teaching, and strategies for addressing learners with varied abilities, backgrounds, and educational needs. The manuscript conceptualizes teacher competence as encompassing professional knowledge, pedagogical skills, motivation, attitudes, and the capacity to make appropriate decisions in diverse classroom situations.

The present finding is reinforced by Balabal and Canuto (2026), whose Philippine study found that public school teachers demonstrated generally high teaching competencies, although competency levels varied across particular areas and respondent characteristics. Their findings underscore that high overall competence does not eliminate the need to identify specific domains where further professional development may be beneficial. The finding also corroborates Brasileño and Bidad (2021), whose Philippine study of Junior High Schools in General Santos City highlighted the importance of teachers' capacity to integrate ICT and appropriate instructional resources into the teaching-learning process, supporting the broader view that contemporary teacher competence involves more than mastery of subject content alone. Moreover, the comparatively lower result for diversity of learners is consistent with Gheyssens et al. (2020) and Lindner et al. (2021), who emphasized that responding effectively to learner heterogeneity through differentiated and inclusive instruction can require sustained professional development and

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additional teacher preparation. Thus, while the respondents demonstrated an outstanding overall level of competence, continuous professional learning remains important, particularly in strengthening their ability to respond effectively to increasingly diverse learner needs.

2. What is the respondents' perceived level of Challenges Encountered?

Table 2: The Respondents' perceived level of Challenges Encountered.

Statements	AWV	SD	Description	Interpretation
A.Content Knowledge and Pedagogy	2.36	1.06	Slightly Challenging	Challenges are experienced to a slight extent
B.Learning Environment and Diversity of Learners	2.24	1.03	Slightly Challenging	Challenges are experienced to a slight extent
C.Curriculum and Planning Assessment and Reporting	2.17	1.11	Slightly Challenging	Challenges are experienced to a slight extent
D.Community Linkages and Professionals Engagement	2.18	1.10	Slightly Challenging	Challenges are experienced to a slight extent
E. Personal Growth and Professional Development	2.07	1.13	Slightly Challenging	Challenges are experienced to a slight extent
Overall	2.21	1.04	Slightly Challenging	Challenges are experienced to a slight extent

AWV-Average Weighted Value, SD-Standard Deviation

Table 2 presents the respondents' perceived level of challenges encountered across five professional domains. The overall Average Weighted Value (AWV) of (2.21) and Standard Deviation (SD) of (1.04) was described as "Slightly Challenging," indicating that respondents experienced challenges to a slight extent. Content Knowledge and Pedagogy obtained the highest AWV of 2.36 (SD = 1.06), followed by Learning Environment and Diversity of Learners at 2.24 (SD = 1.03). Community Linkages and Professional Engagement registered an AWV of 2.18 (SD = 1.10), while Curriculum and Planning, Assessment and Reporting recorded 2.17 (SD = 1.11). Personal Growth and Professional Development received the lowest AWV of 2.07 (SD = 1.13). Although all domains fell within the same descriptive category, instructional knowledge and pedagogy emerged as the greatest relative challenge. Personal Growth and Professional Development had the highest SD, indicating the greatest variation in respondents' ratings among the five domains. These numerical differences are descriptive and do not establish statistically significant differences. This means that respondents generally perceived the challenges associated with their professional responsibilities as limited in extent. Nevertheless, the consistently "Slightly Challenging" ratings indicate that difficulties remained present across all domains. The relatively higher rating for Content Knowledge and Pedagogy suggests that translating subject knowledge into appropriate teaching practices warranted particular attention. Conversely, the lowest rating for Personal Growth and Professional Development indicates fewer perceived difficulties in this area, although it does not independently establish the adequacy of professional development opportunities or respondents' actual competence. This implies that school leaders may prioritize assistance in content knowledge, instructional strategies, and approaches to addressing learner diversity while maintaining support across the other professional domains. Collaborative lesson planning, peer observation, mentoring, and focused professional learning could address these needs. Furthermore, the variation in responses suggests the value of identifying individual support needs rather than relying exclusively on the overall rating when designing interventions.

The current finding is supported in its emphasis on instructional support by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), whose review identified content focus, active learning, collaboration, coaching, and feedback as features of effective teacher professional development. Their findings provide a basis for prioritizing assistance in Content Knowledge and Pedagogy, although they do not directly confirm the "Slightly Challenging" level reported in Table 21. Likewise, the concern regarding Learning Environment and Diversity of Learners is consistent with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2019), which documented continuing professional learning needs related to teaching students with special needs and working in multicultural or multilingual settings. These sources support the relevance of targeted professional assistance; however, differences in populations and measures prevent a direct comparison of challenge levels.

3. Is there a significant relationship between respondents' perceived level of competence and respondents' perceived level of challenges encountered?

Table 3: Test of Relationship between the Levels of Competence and Challenges Encountered

Variables Correlated	rho value	p-value @ 0.05	Interpretation
Competence and Challenges Encountered	-0.311	0.001	Moderate Negative Correlation / Significant

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level*

Table 3 presents the test of relationship between the respondents' perceived level of competence and challenges encountered. The Spearman rank-order correlation yielded a rho value of −0.311 with a p-value of 0.001. Based on the correlation guide adopted in the study, the coefficient indicates a moderate negative correlation. Since the p-value of 0.001 is lower than the 0.05 level of significance, the relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between the perceived level of competence and challenges encountered is rejected. The result establishes a significant inverse association between the two variables. This means that as the respondents' perceived level of competence increases, their perceived level of challenges encountered tends to decrease; conversely, lower perceived competence tends to be associated with greater perceived challenges. The moderate magnitude of the relationship further indicates that competence is meaningfully associated with the challenges experienced by teachers, although the relationship is not strong enough to suggest that competence alone accounts for all variations in the challenges encountered. This implies that strengthening teachers' competencies in content

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knowledge and pedagogy, learning environment and learner diversity, curriculum planning and assessment, community and professional engagement, and professional development may be associated with teachers being better equipped to manage instructional and professional difficulties. Schools may therefore continue providing targeted training, mentoring, coaching, adequate instructional resources, and collaborative professional learning opportunities. However, because the study uses a correlational design, the result indicates association rather than causation; thus, it cannot be concluded that increased competence directly causes a reduction in challenges.

The current finding is supported by Balabal and Canuto (2026), who reported that teachers with longer professional experience generally demonstrated higher ratings across competence domains, suggesting that the development of professional mastery may strengthen teachers' capacity to address the demands of teaching. Their study found significant differences across professionalism, teaching effectiveness, instructional planning, classroom management, and adaptability according to teaching experience. Similarly, the present finding is reinforced by Atabek (2019), who found a significant negative relationship between years of teaching experience and perceived insufficiency of resources ($r = -.254$, $p = .008$), indicating that more experienced education professionals tended to perceive resource-related challenges as less serious. Although these studies do not test exactly the same two constructs as Table 24, they provide related evidence that greater professional capacity or accumulated professional experience can be associated with fewer perceived difficulties. Thus, the significant negative relationship found in the present study is consistent with the broader proposition that stronger professional competence is associated with a greater capacity to manage teaching-related challenges.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that Junior High School teachers in Dapitan City National High School and its extension schools generally perceived themselves as highly competent while experiencing professional challenges to a slight extent. Content knowledge and pedagogy emerged as both their strongest competency and their greatest relative challenge, suggesting that confidence in teaching can coexist with continuing instructional demands. Diversity of learners received the lowest competence rating, highlighting the need for further professional learning in inclusive education, differentiated instruction, and culturally responsive teaching. The significant negative relationship between perceived competence and challenges suggests that teachers who considered themselves more competent tended to experience fewer professional difficulties. These findings support targeted mentoring, collaborative lesson planning, adequate instructional resources, and sustained administrative support to strengthen teachers' capacity to address classroom demands. However, because the study relied on self-reported data and a correlational design, the findings reflect perceived competence and challenges and do not establish that greater competence directly causes fewer difficulties.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Junior High School teachers in Dapitan City National High School and its extension schools perceived themselves as highly competent and experienced professional challenges to a slight extent. Content knowledge and pedagogy emerged as both a professional strength and an area of continuing difficulty, while addressing learner diversity presented the greatest opportunity for competency development. Higher perceived competence was significantly associated with fewer perceived challenges, although this relationship does not establish causation. These findings provide a basis for strengthening targeted professional development, mentoring, and institutional support, particularly in inclusive instruction and content-specific pedagogy.

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Ethical review statement: the research is submitted to the ethical review committee and approved for the conduct of the study. It does not involve human-sensitive issues.
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Corresponding Author: Leo C. Naparota, PhD