



Creating Safe Spaces in Elementary Classrooms in the Northern Philippines Teacher Reports of Practices and Professional Support Needs

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ABSTRACT: This study examines how elementary teachers conceptualize classroom safe spaces and the practices, conditions, and professional support they report. A descriptive survey involved 46 volunteer teachers from at least 21 public and private schools in the northern Philippines. Guidance counselors reviewed the questionnaire, which was pilot-tested with five teachers excluded from the main sample. Categorical and multiple-response items and five agreement items were analyzed using descriptive statistics and exploratory nonparametric comparisons. Emotional support or inclusion was the preferred definition of safe spaces for 80.4% of respondents, and 89.1% selected communication and trust as important elements. Although 91.3% reported always implementing safe-space strategies, selections varied across classroom rules (80.4%), open dialogue (76.1%), and explicit social-emotional learning instruction (41.3%). Managing diverse student needs was the most frequently recorded challenge (52.2%). More than half reported no formal safe-space training, and collaboration with counselors or mental health professionals was the most frequently selected support (39.1%). School sector and teaching experience overlapped substantially, limiting interpretation of exploratory comparisons. These findings distinguish reported implementation frequency from the specific practices and support priorities described by teachers. They identify areas for local assessment of teacher development, consultation, and referral arrangements, while the voluntary sample and reliance on self-reports limit generalization and do not establish the effectiveness of classroom practices.

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INTRODUCTION

Classroom safety can be defined as a set of features facilitating active participation of students, enabling them to raise issues and seek help in a protected environment. Classroom safety in the literature on school climate is addressed from a standpoint of relations, instruction, and an institutional environment (Thapa et al., 2013; Wang & Degol, 2016). The current project identifies safe classroom space as one that ensures emotional support, belonging, respectful engagement, and safety from harm. The present definition is based on the findings in both fields of inquiry; however, Holley and Steiner's work (2005) applies to higher education settings.

In the Philippines, PISA 2018 reported that 65% of participating students reported being bullied at least a few times a month, compared with 23% across OECD countries (OECD, 2019). These historical estimates concern 15-year-olds and are not elementary-school prevalence estimates. They nevertheless establish a national context for examining protective educational environments. The 2012 DepEd Child Protection Policy established responsibilities for protecting learners from abuse, violence, discrimination, and bullying (Department of Education, 2012), while Republic Act No. 12080 (2024) provides for school-based mental health services, including teacher support and referral functions.

Research supports structured approaches to supportive learning environments. Meta-analyses have reported benefits of universal school-based social-emotional learning (SEL) and reductions in bullying through evaluated prevention programs (Cipriano et al., 2023; Durlak et al., 2011; Gaffney et al., 2019). Implementation also involves decisions about how practices are delivered. Lovett et al. (2024) documented teachers' adaptations of SEL lessons in response to student, program, and contextual factors. These findings make both teachers' selected practices and the conditions surrounding implementation relevant to inquiry.

Philippine research identifies further questions about professional support. Nalipay et al. (2025), interviewing 15 elementary and high school teachers, described concerns about the boundary between teaching and counseling, alongside emotional support, consultation, and referral responses. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) found characteristics of effective professional development that include active learning, collaboration, feedback, and duration. Kennedy (2016) pointed out the significance of studying how professional development helps teachers implement new ideas rather than making conclusions about its effectiveness based on design characteristics. In sum, the literature cited above gives a basis for assessing teachers' preparation and professional development alongside classroom practices.

Two theoretical perspectives guide the current research. The prosocial classroom perspective links teacher social-emotional competence and well-being with the development of relationships, classroom management, and SEL (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). The ecological perspective of Bronfenbrenner (1979) considers micro-level interactions in a wider context and institutional environment. Both perspectives provide a basis for looking into conceptions, practice, conditions, and priorities of support together. The survey does not assess teacher social-emotional competence or test causal connections; its unit of analysis is the teacher.

The present research study seeks to answer different but related questions on the evidence of student exposure to bullying, evaluated interventions, and teachers' experiences of mental health care. Evidence alone, however, is insufficient to define how the preferred constructions of classroom safety, practices, conditions, and support priorities are aligned in the particular local sample of respondents. In addition, a general evaluation of implementation has a certain set of restrictions in relation to this particular task since respondents may report the same frequency but differ in terms of practices and support needs. This is why the research problem of this paper is focused on describing the pattern of the combination of these aspects in participating elementary teachers.

Specifically, this study uses a survey of volunteer elementary teachers in the northern Philippines to describe teachers' conceptions of classroom safe spaces, practices, conditions, training, problems, and support priorities. It also examines response differences by school sector, training, and experience. The research questions are the following:

1. How do respondents define a classroom safe space, and which elements do they consider important?
2. How frequently do respondents report implementing safe-space strategies, and which strategies do they report using?
3. How do respondents rate their preparation, administrative support, available time, perceived student comfort in self-expression, and school policies?
4. Which challenges and forms of formal training do respondents report?
5. Which professional supports and improvement directions do respondents prioritize?
6. What exploratory differences in ratings or responses are observed by school sector, formal training, and teaching experience?

Analysis of these two perspectives provides the empirical analysis of teachers' reported practices and their priorities in terms of support. For administrators and teacher development committees, the profile gives the list of areas where local assessments might be made, such as specific training needed and the amount of time to spend on support-related activities. For school counselors, it places the context of teacher referral practice in relation to classroom-safety debate. Relational perspective and ecological approach contribute to the analysis, whereas future researchers can explore the alignment between the reported practices and support and student experience.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design

The study used a descriptive survey design with exploratory group comparisons. It examined teachers' conceptions, reported practices, perceived conditions, and professional support priorities. All 46 responses belonged to the main study and were pooled across two collection periods. The design provided a descriptive account rather than an estimate of change over time.

Participants and recruitment

Respondents consisted of educators currently teaching kindergarten or elementary students who took part in an online questionnaire voluntarily. This survey was sent to teachers through the help of professional networks within different communities and school environments. For the recruitment process, nonprobability voluntary response sampling method was used. A response rate could not be estimated because the number of potential respondents was unknown.

The participants were 46 volunteer kindergarten and elementary teachers from at least 21 public and private schools in the Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley, and Cordillera Administrative Region. Both data-gathering periods were part of the main study design. School names were standardized to count institutions.

The instrument covered definitions, reported strategies, perceived conditions, training, challenges, and support priorities. It did not include classroom observation, student-reported safety measures, or direct assessment of counselors' accessibility and effectiveness. The results described the participants and were not intended to represent the regions or school sectors.

Questionnaire and measurement

The survey carried out through an online platform, Survey on Creating Safe Spaces in Elementary Schools, was designed by the researcher based on literature on safe spaces and school climate (Holley & Steiner, 2005; Thapa et al., 2013). The tool consisted of the respondent's personal information, categorical and multiple response items covering the concepts and implementation, five Likert scale agreement items, and questions relating to training and priority concerns. Guidance counselors checked the tool's relevance, but there was no need for any revision. Pilot testing was done among five elementary teachers and they filled out the questionnaire within a relevant period.

The five items in the agreement measure assessed perceived adequacy of training, perceived administrative support, perceived availability of time for addressing the social-emotional needs of students, perceived comfort of students in expressing themselves, and perceived clarity of school policies. Participants responded using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Since the five items involved personal preparation, institutional setting, and perceived student behavior, attention was paid to item-level analyses. The five-item index was retained as a preliminary descriptive index.

The index was treated as a preliminary description of five appraisals rather than a classroom safety scale. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and item-total correlations; these indices did not establish unidimensionality or construct validity (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Data collection

Responses were collected using an online questionnaire administered through Google Forms. The main-study dataset comprised six responses recorded on 26 February 2025 and 40 recorded between 7 and 29 September 2025.

Data analysis

Categorical responses were summarized using frequencies and percentages. Each selected multiple-response option was counted once per respondent, with 46 as the denominator; percentages could therefore exceed 100 in total. Definition choices were interpreted as preferences among supplied options. Challenge, support, and improvement items were summarized according to their recorded response structure. The limited closing comments were not treated as a separate qualitative dataset.

All recorded selections were retained when responses exceeded the requested maximum. Challenge, support, and improvement responses were interpreted as selected options rather than complete lists of needs. Training effectiveness was asked of all respondents, but its analysis was restricted to the 20 respondents reporting formal training.

Agreement items were summarized using means, standard deviations, and the proportion selecting agree or strongly agree. Means described the numerical coding of ordinal responses and were presented alongside agreement counts. Spearman's ρ was used for associations involving the agreement items, implementation frequency, and the number of strategies selected. The concentration of implementation responses in the highest category was considered when interpreting these correlations.

Mann-Whitney U tests compared item ratings and the provisional index by school sector and formal-training status, with effect-size magnitudes expressed as $r = |Z|/\sqrt{N}$. Kruskal-Wallis tests compared three experience groups: three years or less, four to ten years, and more than ten years. Fisher's exact tests compared school sectors on formal training and on selection of diverse student needs versus other challenges. Analyses used Python with pandas and SciPy. Tests were two-sided where applicable, with a nominal α of .05. The comparisons were exploratory; unadjusted p values were reported alongside effect sizes where available. No adjustment for shared-school recruitment was made.

Ethical considerations and confidentiality

Participation in the survey was on a voluntary basis. The survey began with an explanation of its purpose and the intended use of responses for research purposes. As the names of the schools and personal contacts were gathered from the participants, the responses were treated as confidential rather than anonymous. The email addresses of the participants given as an option for receiving survey results were not included in the analysis dataset. Results

Respondent profile and response characteristics

For the analysis, there were 46 teachers from at least 21 schools: 18 public and three private schools from the Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley and the Cordillera Administrative Region. One respondent did not state a school name. There were 34 public-school teachers (73.9%) and 34 homeroom teachers (73.9%), and 24 teachers (52.2%) had over 10 years of teaching experience in elementary schools (Table 1).

School sector and teaching experience overlapped substantially. All 12 private-school respondents had seven years of experience or less, and nine had three years or less. In contrast, 24 of 34 public-school respondents had more than ten years of experience. Teachers were also drawn from shared schools.

Certain response characteristics required addressing. Four respondents exceeded the instruction to choose three important elements. Although the challenge, support, and improvement prompts permitted multiple responses, each respondent recorded one selection per prompt.

The internal consistency of the index was described by a Cronbach's alpha of .87 and item-total correlations of between .64 and .78 in the analytical sample.

Conceptions and important elements

Emotional support and comfort in self-expression was the preferred definition for 22 respondents (47.8%), and inclusion and respect for 15 (32.6%). Together, these options accounted for 37 responses (80.4%). Physical protection from bullying or harm was selected by seven respondents (15.2%) and structure and clear expectations by two (4.3%; Table 2).

Open communication and trust was the most frequently selected element (41 of 46, 89.1%), followed by anti-bullying policies and enforcement (30, 65.2%) and teacher emotional support (25, 54.3%). Conflict-resolution strategies were selected by four teachers (8.7%). Emotional support was the most common definition among public-school respondents (19 of 34), whereas inclusion and respect was the most common among private-school respondents (eight of 12).

Reported implementation and strategies

Forty-two respondents (91.3%) reported always implementing safe-space strategies, three (6.5%) reported often, and one (2.2%) reported sometimes. All 12 private-school respondents selected always.

Rules and open dialogue were the most frequently selected strategies (Table 3). The median number selected was three ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.67$, range = 1–6). Strategy count showed little association with implementation frequency ($\rho = -.04$, $p = .78$) or the provisional index ($\rho = -.04$, $p = .80$).

Perceived preparation and classroom conditions

Administrative support received the highest mean agreement rating ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 0.75$), followed by clear policies ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.72$) and perceived student comfort in self-expression ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 0.69$). Available time ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.91$) and perceived training adequacy ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.94$) received lower means. Agreement counts and percentages were shown in Table 4; the differences in item means were descriptive.

For both time and training adequacy, 12 respondents (26.1%) selected neutral or disagreement responses; three disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were adequately trained. The five items were positively associated (Spearman's $\rho = .48-.73$, all $p \leq .001$), with the largest correlation between policies and perceived student comfort ($\rho = .73$). Correlations with implementation frequency ranged from $-.01$ to $.14$ (all $p > .35$).

Challenges and formal training

Managing diverse student needs was the most frequently recorded challenge (24 of 46, 52.2%). Other selections concerned resources (eight, 17.4%), curriculum-related time constraints (seven, 15.2%), training (five, 10.9%), and resistance from administrators or parents (two, 4.3%). Table 5 presented the sector-specific counts alongside formal-training responses.

Twenty-six respondents (56.5%) reported no formal safe-space training: 20 selected informal learning through experience and six selected no training at all. Among the 20 reporting formal training, 16 identified professional-development workshops and four identified teacher education. Thirteen (65.0%) rated their training very effective and seven (35.0%) somewhat effective.

Professional support and improvement priorities

Collaboration with school counselors or mental health professionals was the most frequently recorded support selection (18 of 46, 39.1%). Other selections were professional development (14, 30.4%), administrative support for safe-space policies (seven, 15.2%), smaller classes (six, 13.0%), and inclusive classroom materials (one, 2.2%). Among public-school respondents, counselor collaboration and professional development were selected by 15 and 12 teachers, respectively. Among private-school respondents, administrative support was the most common recorded selection (four of 12).

For improvement directions, respondents selected curriculum integration of SEL (12, 26.1%), ongoing teacher training (ten, 21.7%), stronger teacher–student relationships (nine, 19.6%), parental involvement in school-climate discussions (eight, 17.4%), and anti-bullying enforcement (seven, 15.2%). These were frequencies of recorded selections rather than importance ratings for every option.

In the closing item, 31 respondents (67.4%) indicated nothing further to add, nine (19.6%) indicated significant challenges, and six (13.0%) indicated strategies they found effective. Only one explanatory comment was available. It concerned classroom management and advice about bullying; the remaining selections were not accompanied by substantive explanations.

Exploratory comparisons

No Mann–Whitney comparison by school sector or formal-training status reached the nominal .05 threshold (Tables 6 and 7). Trained respondents had descriptively higher item means. Effect-size magnitudes ranged from .01 to .22 for sector comparisons and from .03 to .19 for training comparisons.

Formal training was reported by nine of 12 private-school respondents (75.0%) and 11 of 34 public-school respondents (32.4%; Fisher's exact $p = .017$). Diverse student needs was selected as the challenge by 11 private-school respondents (91.7%) and 13 public-school respondents (38.2%; Fisher's exact $p = .002$). The second test contrasted this response with all other recorded challenges, rather than the full five-category distribution. Both findings used unadjusted p values.

Provisional index means were 4.55 for teachers with three years of experience or less ($n = 13$), 3.93 for those with four to ten years ($n = 9$), and 4.24 for those with more than ten years ($n = 24$). The Kruskal–Wallis result was $H(2) = 5.79$, $p = .055$, $\varepsilon^2 = .09$. The clear-policies item had $H(2) = 6.01$, $p = .0495$; this finding would not remain below .05 under a Bonferroni adjustment across the six experience comparisons.

DISCUSSION

The findings distinguish the general frequency of reported implementation from the content and support needs described in teachers' accounts. The reported regular implementation of these strategies is accompanied by varied strategy selection, informal training, and calls for help from professionals. This approach points to the importance of considering the ways in which relational understandings of safety are promoted through classroom processes, preparation, and availability of consultation. The subsequent analysis takes into account these factors in light of literature.

Relational safety and classroom structure

The focus on emotional support, inclusion, communication, and trust grounds classroom safety in the relationship between teachers and students. This definition aligns with the prosocial classroom framework and findings of a link between affective teacher-student relationships and engagement and academic success (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Roorda et al., 2011). The parallel selection of explicit rules indicates that the respondents perceive classroom safety as predictability of classroom behaviors. Relational support and behavioral structure therefore appear together in the sample's responses, although the survey did not measure how teachers combined them in particular classrooms.

This point becomes very important for interpreting the findings. Physical protection is the definition selected by 15.2% of respondents, whereas 65.2% of respondents identify anti-bullying policies and enforcement as important elements. This finding corroborates the hypothesis that an important relational definition can be coupled with recognition of protective measures at the same time. However, the comparatively low number of choices of conflict resolution deserves more attention because of the way the teacher understands this competency. The fact that respondents selected one of the limited elements does not mean that there are no missing competencies and practices.

Interpreting the content of reported practice

The general frequency item and the strategy inventory address different aspects of practice. The former, marked by "Always," refers to practice conducted in a consistent manner, while the latter refers to practice conducted using a range of strategies. These two metrics do not inform about the time dedicated to practice or the quality thereof. This allows for explaining the existence of high frequency with different strategy selections without the necessity to assume respondent inconsistency.

That 41.3% of respondents opt for explicit SEL instruction deserves a discussion of teacher perception of SEL and implementation thereof. There is meta-analytic research supporting the positive effects of SEL, but it depends on implementation and context (Cipriano et al., 2023; Durlak et al., 2011). In particular, Lovett et al. (2024), relying on diaries and interviews from 17 elementary and middle-school teachers, reported changes in lesson contents, timing, and delivery. These observations shed light on the dimensions of practice that cannot be revealed through a checklist; thus, the reasons behind non-selected SEL strategies should be considered directly.

The ceiling effect of implementation limits the interpretation of weak correlations. Since 42 out of 46 participants have selected the highest category, the question reveals poor discrimination. There can be several reasons for such behavior of the respondents, namely, a low range of variation, a wide item description, and social desirability. In consequence, the results provide better guidelines about the distribution of the selected practices and not the factors determining the frequency of their implementation.

Preparation as participation and perceived adequacy

Formal training and perceptions of adequate training offer complementary data. The former documents participation in a particular training experience; the latter documents the teacher's perception of preparation. Over 50% report no formal training, yet 34 out of 46 consider themselves adequately prepared. These overall summaries do not pinpoint the exact intersection of these two categories. Twenty teachers list informal learning via experience, and thus this mode of learning is important to consider further, despite not having any measure of its value or contribution.

All 20 formally trained teachers express a positive perception of their training, but the survey documents this training in general categories. A “workshop” response does not indicate time frame, content, practice, or follow up. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) identified sustained duration, active learning, and feedback among features of effective professional development. Kennedy (2016), however, found that many commonly favored design features did not distinguish program effectiveness and emphasized the approaches used to help teachers enact new ideas. The present findings therefore support examining both training content and how it is applied locally; they do not establish which training features would be effective in these schools. Nonsignificant group tests neither demonstrate equivalence nor establish that training was ineffective.

Counseling consultation and shared support

Collaboration with a counselor or mental health professional is the most frequent support selection, chosen by 18 respondents (39.1%). This is the largest response group; the remaining selections also identify professional development and institutional arrangements as priorities. The counseling contribution lies in identifying teacher consultation as a practical area for needs assessment alongside student-directed services. The finding is consistent with Nalipay et al. (2025), whose Philippine participants described role-boundary questions and consultation or referral responses when handling student mental health concerns.

Consultation can be considered as a proposed means of helping teachers discuss classroom responses and clarify when another professional’s involvement is needed. Referral research also suggests that access alone is an incomplete description of this process. Chui et al. (2023) found that 12 Hong Kong secondary teachers considered factors including parent beliefs, students’ willingness, and interactions with professionals when making referrals. These findings concern a different age group and setting, but identify questions for local inquiry about how collaboration operates. The present survey did not measure referral behavior or distinguish preferences for different mental health professions.

A locally developed response could therefore specify how teachers request consultation, whom they contact for referral, and how classroom support continues afterward. Republic Act No. 12080 (2024, Section 8[f–g]) assigns public-school Care Centers functions that include teacher training and support and referral for learners’ mental health needs. Such arrangements would require evaluation in the participating settings. Diverse student needs is a broad challenge category encompassing behavioral, emotional, and cultural concerns; it should not be equated with mental disorder or assumed to require counseling in every case.

School conditions and exploratory comparisons

Ecological perspective highlights the importance of organizational context in providing classroom assistance by the teachers. Administrative support and the policy environment receive favorable evaluations, but time adequacy and training adequacy receive comparatively low mean scores. So favorable perception of leadership could be coupled with seeking practical assistance. These positive inter-item correlations could have resulted either from convergent experience in receiving assistance or favorable responding as such, including shared methods effects (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Positive inter-item correlations are not an indicator that improving one rated condition will also improve other ones.

The sector comparisons raise questions for local investigation rather than provide an explanation of differences between public and private schools. Private-school respondents more often report receiving formal training and identify diverse student needs as their main challenge. However, all have seven years of teaching experience or less and represent only three schools. Teaching experience, institutional conditions, recruitment procedures, and the collection period may all have contributed to the observed differences. Responses from teachers within the same school may also have reduced statistical independence. The findings therefore cannot isolate the contribution of school sector or serve as a general basis for distributing support between sectors.

LIMITATIONS

The voluntary sample is small and unrepresentative and reflects recruitment through professional networking contacts. It is unlikely to be representative of the regions or sectors covered, and may disproportionately select teachers interested in classroom safety. School sector and experience overlap severely limits independent interpretations. Teachers have been selected from multiple schools within a school sector, but the differences identified have not controlled for this clustering.

The investigation relies on the self-reports of the teachers rather than actual classroom practices and student perceptions. Overly general question wording, social desirability response tendencies, and a ceiling effect on frequency of implementation may hinder discriminability. The proposed scale comprises different assessments; internal reliability does not demonstrate construct validity. The expert evaluation and pilot test with five teachers offer initial indications of suitability and administrability.

Restrictions on Interpretation Due to Response Structure

Four participants exceeded the important-elements criterion for selection. Several items that suggested multiple selections resulted in only one selection recorded. Minimal information was provided in explanations. Therefore, the selections made by individual participants did not account for all practices and needs of each participant. Inclusion of the option involving both counselors and mental health professionals makes interpretation of profession-specific associations impossible. Common patterns found in the

analysis pertain to the sample in general rather than show that certain individual participants encountered some problem and used certain kinds of assistance.

Two main periods when data were collected for the main study were conducted seven months apart from each other, and differences between periods were not considered. Data need to be documented for assessment of procedure comparability and of the context in which the procedure is taking place. More exploratory tests were conducted without correction for Type I error, resulting in an increased possibility of false positive findings. Small samples limit possibilities to get precise results.

Implications and Future Research

These results suggest a localized approach in three key areas: the substance of professional training, the availability of time to conduct classroom support activities, and consultations. The training programs should involve real classroom case material as well as opportunities for practice and evaluation, followed up by a review to see how the knowledge gained has been applied. Decisions should take into account the needs of particular schools and teachers; the exploratory comparative studies are not sufficient to make generalizations about all public, private, new, or veteran teachers.

In terms of the school counseling services, the preference for collaborative approaches justifies a review of teachers' consulting and referring practices. School staff can establish designated contacts, the purpose of consultations, procedures for referrals, and the limits on information sharing under the existing policies. These are suggestions based on descriptive findings and should be assessed in terms of feasibility and effectiveness rather than simply accepted. Additional attention needs to be paid to SEL and conflict resolution activities in relation to developmental needs and classroom practices.

Additional research needs to be done to improve the response controls, set a time period for implementing these responses, as well as distinguish between formal training, feelings of competence, and organizational resources. Using a larger sample size and designing the experiment with consideration to school setting would allow for greater interpretive ability. In-depth interviews could explore teachers' interpretation of these strategies and their choice between different support possibilities. Using narratives provided by teachers in addition to classroom observation and student perceptions would make assessment of classroom safety more straightforward.

CONCLUSION

This study examines how 46 elementary teachers in the northern Philippines understand classroom safe spaces, describe their practices, appraise facilitating conditions, and prioritize professional support. Emotional support and inclusion are the most frequently selected definitions of safe spaces, while respondents generally report frequent implementation of safe-space strategies. Rules and dialogue are selected more often than explicit social-emotional learning instruction, and more than half report no formal safe-space training. Managing diverse student needs is the most frequently recorded challenge, and collaboration with counselors or mental health professionals is the most frequently selected form of support. The exploratory comparisons are difficult to interpret separately from the overlap between school sector and teaching experience.

The results provide evidence about the added benefit of examining specific practices and support preferences in the context of general implementation rating. Relational and ecological perspectives allow for the identification of preparation and collaboration as critical areas for local assessment. Limitations of interpretation are voluntary sample, teacher self-reports, response biases, and two-time-periods data collection. This research does not prove either students' perception of safety or effectiveness of particular practices.

The profile can be used by school administrators and counseling departments in assessing training programs, setting aside time for class interventions, and determining how consultations and referrals are to be conducted. It is important for decisions to be made based on the needs of each particular school and not from the findings of exploratory comparisons of the sector.

Further research will need to develop the measure, solve problems connected to recruitment at a shared school level, and incorporate teacher reports, observations, and consultations and referrals. The important thing now is to connect teacher attempts at classroom safety with preparation and professional assistance.

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Table 1. Respondent profile

Characteristic	Category	n	%
School type	Public	34	73.9
	Private	12	26.1
Position	Homeroom teacher	34	73.9
	Subject teacher	9	19.6
	Other	3	6.5
Years in elementary teaching	Less than 1 year	2	4.3
	1–3 years	11	23.9
	4–7 years	8	17.4
	8–10 years	1	2.2
	More than 10 years	24	52.2
Grade level taught	Kindergarten	3	6.5
	Grade 1	7	15.2
	Grade 2	4	8.7
	Grade 3	12	26.1
	Grade 4	3	6.5
	Grade 5	9	19.6
	Grade 6	8	17.4

Note. N = 46. Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.

Table 2. Preferred definitions and important elements

Item	Response	n	%
Definition (one choice)	Emotional support and comfort in self-expression	22	47.8
	Inclusivity and respect for all students	15	32.6
	Physical security, free from bullying or harm	7	15.2
	Structure, clear rules and expectations	2	4.3
Most important elements (up to three)	Open communication and trust between students and teachers	41	89.1
	Anti-bullying policies and enforcement	30	65.2
	Emotional support from teachers	25	54.3
	Inclusive teaching practices	13	28.3
	Classroom layout and physical environment	13	28.3
	Conflict resolution strategies	4	8.7

Note. N = 46. One definition was recorded per respondent. Important elements permitted multiple selections, so percentages exceed 100 in total. Four respondents exceeded the requested maximum of three choices; all recorded selections are retained in this descriptive presentation.

Table 3. Strategies respondents reported using

Strategy	n	%
Clear classroom rules and expectations	37	80.4
Open dialogue and student participation	35	76.1
Regular student check-ins	26	56.5
Anti-bullying programs	24	52.2
Teaching SEL skills	19	41.3
Designated safe-space area	12	26.1

Note. N = 46. Multiple responses permitted. SEL = social-emotional learning. Values represent self-reported use.

Table 4. Agreement with preparation and condition statements

Statement	M	SD	Agree or strongly agree n (%)
Administrative support	4.52	0.75	41 (89.1)
Clear school policies	4.43	0.72	42 (91.3)
Perceived student comfort in self-expression	4.41	0.69	41 (89.1)
Enough time for social-emotional needs	4.02	0.91	34 (73.9)
Feeling adequately trained	3.96	0.94	34 (73.9)

Note. N = 46. Responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Agreement combines categories 4 and 5. The provisional five-item index had M = 4.27 and SD = 0.65.

Table 5. Recorded challenges and formal training by school sector

Variable and response	Public n = 34	Private n = 12	Total N = 46
Main challenge — Managing diverse student needs	13 (38.2%)	11 (91.7%)	24 (52.2%)
Lack of resources	8 (23.5%)	0	8 (17.4%)
Time constraints from curriculum	7 (20.6%)	0	7 (15.2%)
Lack of training	5 (14.7%)	0	5 (10.9%)
Resistance from administration or parents	1 (2.9%)	1 (8.3%)	2 (4.3%)
Formal training — Yes, professional development workshops	9 (26.5%)	7 (58.3%)	16 (34.8%)
Yes, teacher education program	2 (5.9%)	2 (16.7%)	4 (8.7%)
No, learned informally through experience	17 (50.0%)	3 (25.0%)	20 (43.5%)
No training at all	6 (17.6%)	0	6 (13.0%)

Note. Percentages use the relevant sector or total denominator. Each respondent contributed one recorded challenge and one training response. Formal training combines workshops and teacher education.

Table 6. Exploratory comparisons by school sector

Condition	Public M	Private M	U	p	r
Perceived training adequacy	3.82	4.33	260.0	.139	.22
Administrative support	4.56	4.42	200.5	.929	.01
Enough time	4.00	4.08	207.5	.937	.01

Condition	Public M	Private M	U	p	r
Perceived student comfort	4.38	4.50	213.0	.813	.03
Clear policies	4.35	4.67	246.0	.243	.17
Provisional index	4.22	4.40	228.0	.551	.09

Note. Public n = 34; private n = 12. Two-sided Mann–Whitney tests. Means provide descriptive context for tests of ranked responses. Effect-size magnitudes are $|r| = |Z|/\sqrt{N}$. The provisional index summarizes the five agreement items. Unadjusted p values are reported.

Table 7. *Exploratory comparisons by formal training*

Condition	Untrained M	Trained M	U	p	r
Perceived training adequacy	3.77	4.20	313.0	.216	.18
Administrative support	4.38	4.70	310.0	.193	.19
Enough time	3.96	4.10	268.0	.860	.03
Perceived student comfort	4.31	4.55	305.0	.272	.16
Clear policies	4.38	4.50	271.0	.793	.04
Provisional index	4.16	4.41	302.5	.346	.14

Note. Untrained n = 26; trained n = 20. The provisional index summarizes the five agreement items. Two-sided Mann–Whitney tests with unadjusted p values; effect-size magnitudes are $|r| = |Z|/\sqrt{N}$.