

Master Teachers' Experiences in Classroom Management, Teaching Strategies, Students' Engagement, and Behavior in the Digital Era

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Abstract

This study explored the lived experiences of Master Teachers in classroom management, teaching strategies, and student behavior in the digital era at Vitali National High School. Anchored on the view that effective classroom management is shaped by instructional practices, teacher-learner relationships, behavior management strategies, and teachers' capacity to respond to changing classroom conditions, the study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design. Two Master Teachers from Vitali National High School were purposively selected as respondents because of their teaching experience, instructional leadership roles, and direct involvement in classroom management and learner engagement. Data were gathered using a researcher-made modified semi-structured interview guide, audio-recorded interviews, and field notes, and were analyzed through thematic analysis. Findings revealed that classroom management in the digital era requires adaptability, resilience, patience, innovation, and learner-centered practices. The participants used technology-supported and interactive strategies such as Google Classroom, Kahoot, Mentimeter, online quizzes, group discussions, breakout rooms, recorded lessons, differentiated activities, and follow-up tasks to promote engagement and address diverse learner needs. However, challenges such as unstable internet connection, limited gadgets, online distractions, lack of focus, absenteeism, low responsiveness, and limited parental support affected teaching and learning. The study concluded that effective digital-era classroom management requires inclusive, engaging, responsible, and supportive learning environments supported by teacher professional growth, parent collaboration, improved infrastructure, and equitable access to technology. The study aligns with SDG 4, Quality Education, by supporting improved teaching practices, learner engagement, and inclusive classroom instruction. It also relates to SDG 16, Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, by promoting orderly, respectful, and supportive learning environments. Its sustainability impact lies in strengthening educational and institutional practices through teacher development, mentoring, digital pedagogy, and responsive classroom management.

Keywords: Classroom Management, Digital Era, Learner-Centered Teaching, Master Teachers, Phenomenological Research, Student Behavior, Student Engagement, Teaching Strategies, Technology-Supported Instruction

1. Introduction

Classroom management is a central component of effective teaching and learning because it shapes the organization, behavior, participation, and overall quality of classroom experiences. In the digital era, classroom management has become more complex as teachers respond not only to discipline and routines but also to technology use, online distractions, diverse learner needs, and changing instructional demands. In Philippine public secondary schools, these realities are especially relevant because teachers handle learners with varied academic, behavioral, and learning characteristics while also aligning instruction with learner-centered education policies. This study focuses on the experiences of Master Teachers in classroom management, teaching strategies, student engagement, and behavior in the digital era.

1.1 Classroom Management and Learner Behavior in Digital-Era Secondary Education

Classroom management encompasses the strategies, routines, and approaches teachers use to establish a positive, organized, and supportive learning environment that promotes academic engagement and appropriate behavior. It extends beyond maintaining order because it also involves building meaningful teacher-student relationships, promoting active participation, addressing diverse learner needs, and sustaining purposeful learning experiences. In contemporary classrooms, teachers are increasingly challenged to manage learners who are exposed to technology, social media, online distractions, and rapidly changing instructional demands (Emmer & Evertson, 2013). In the Philippine educational context, classroom management remains a continuing concern, particularly in public secondary schools where learners differ in academic needs, learning styles, and behavioral characteristics. The use of digital learning tools has transformed classroom instruction and interaction by providing opportunities for interactive learning while also creating concerns related to

attention, participation, discipline, and behavior. The K to 12 Program under Republic Act 10533 emphasizes learner-centered pedagogy, active participation, meaningful learning, and holistic learner development.

1.2 Teaching Strategies, Classroom Practices, and Student Engagement in the Digital Era

Related literature emphasizes that classroom management in the digital era involves routines, teacher-student interaction, behavior management, and instructional approaches that promote participation and engagement. Teachers are expected to create structures that support discipline, cooperation, and positive learning behavior. Strong teacher-student relationships also help develop trust, respect, and emotional support, which encourage learners to participate actively in classroom activities. However, teachers continue to face challenges in managing student behavior while integrating technology and digital resources into instruction (Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012). Teaching strategies also influence classroom experiences and student participation. Flexible and responsive approaches such as interactive discussions, collaborative learning activities, technology-assisted instruction, and learner-centered practices help address learners' diverse needs and interests. Nevertheless, teachers may experience difficulty sustaining students' focus, motivation, and appropriate behavior in digital learning environments. Student behavior remains a major factor in classroom effectiveness. Positive behavior supports cooperation, responsibility, and active participation, while behavioral concerns such as inattentiveness, low motivation, classroom disruptions, and lack of participation may affect the teaching-learning process. In the digital era, these challenges may be intensified by technology misuse, online distractions, and changing learner attitudes (Sullivan et al., 2014).

1.3 Philippine and Global Contexts of Master Teachers' Classroom Management Experiences

Local and international studies consistently show that effective classroom management and teaching practices contribute to student participation, meaningful interaction, and supportive learning environments. In the Philippine setting, these concerns are connected to the continuing implementation of learner-centered education under the K to 12 curriculum. Globally, the digital transformation of education has also reshaped classroom interaction, requiring teachers to manage both face-to-face learning behaviors and technology-related challenges. Despite these developments, there remains limited qualitative inquiry focusing specifically on the experiences, challenges, and insights of Master Teachers regarding classroom management, teaching strategies, and students' behavior in the digital era.

1.4 Conceptual Basis of Master Teachers as Instructional Leaders in Classroom Management

This study is conceptually grounded in the view that effective classroom management is shaped by teachers' instructional practices, relationships with learners, behavior management strategies, and capacity to respond to changing classroom conditions. Master Teachers are significant in this context because they are recognized as instructional leaders with extensive teaching experience and expertise in managing classroom situations. They are also expected to mentor colleagues and contribute to improved classroom instruction within the school community. Their lived experiences provide insight into how teachers address student behavior, implement teaching strategies, and manage classroom challenges in contemporary educational settings (Danielson, 2007).

1.5 Research Gaps and Rationale for Exploring Master Teachers' Experiences

Although many studies have examined classroom management and student outcomes, several have relied mainly on quantitative approaches. There remains a need for qualitative investigations that provide richer understanding of teachers' actual experiences, classroom realities, instructional practices, and challenges in contemporary educational settings. Exploring the experiences of Master Teachers can offer deeper insight into how classroom management and teaching strategies are practiced in authentic classroom situations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study aims to explore the experiences of Master Teachers in classroom management, teaching strategies, and students' behavior in the digital era. Specifically, it seeks to understand how Master Teachers manage classroom situations, implement teaching strategies, address student behavior, cope with challenges, and share insights on effective classroom management and instructional practices. The findings may contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing an in-depth understanding of Master Teachers' classroom experiences and may serve as a basis for improving classroom management practices, strengthening teacher development programs, and supporting learner-centered educational initiatives in the Philippine educational system (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

1.6 Alignment with SDG 4 and SDG 16 in Classroom Management and Teacher Development

This study aligns with SDG 4 – Quality Education because it focuses on classroom management, teaching strategies, learner engagement, and student behavior, all of which are directly connected to improving teaching and learning experiences. It also supports SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions to the extent that effective classroom management promotes orderly, respectful, and supportive learning environments within educational institutions. These SDGs are relevant because the study emphasizes learner-centered practices, positive classroom relationships, and teacher development as foundations for stronger educational outcomes.

1.7 Educational, Institutional, and Socio-Community Sustainability of Master Teachers' Classroom Practices

The study contributes to educational sustainability by generating insights that may support improved classroom management, responsive teaching strategies, and positive learner behavior in the digital era. It also relates to institutional sustainability because the experiences of Master Teachers may inform teacher development programs, mentoring practices, and school-based initiatives that strengthen classroom instruction. Furthermore, the study has socio-economic and community sustainability relevance because effective classroom environments help support learner participation, holistic development, and long-term educational improvement within the Philippine basic education system.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design, which seeks to understand human experience as it is consciously lived and perceived. Phenomenological research describes the essential structure of lived experiences by gathering detailed accounts from individuals who have directly experienced the phenomenon under study. In this study, the phenomenon refers to the lived experiences of Master Teachers in classroom management, teaching strategies, and students' behavior in the digital era at Vitali National High School. The design was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to explore how Master Teachers experienced, interpreted, and responded to classroom challenges and teaching demands in a digitally evolving educational environment (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The phenomenological approach also supported the identification of teaching strategies, classroom management challenges, coping practices, and professional insights. It enabled the researcher to examine the meanings and reflections behind the participants' practices in technology-integrated classrooms. It also provided a flexible framework for understanding teachers' adaptive responses to modern classroom realities. Through this design, the voices and perspectives of the Master Teachers remained central to the research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Vitali National High School, a public secondary school in the District of Vitali, located along the eastern coastal area of Zamboanga City. Vitali is approximately 73 kilometers from the city proper and serves coastal and agricultural communities, creating a diverse socio-cultural environment that influences the educational experiences of teachers and students (Department of Education, 2013). Vitali National High School serves learners from different barangays and neighboring communities with varied academic backgrounds, abilities, and learning needs. The school implements programs aligned with the Department of Education's goals, particularly in instructional delivery, classroom management, and student development. The presence of experienced Master Teachers who mentor colleagues and support classroom instruction made the school an appropriate locale for the study (Danielson, 2007). The site was also selected because the researcher is affiliated with the school and had access to the participants and natural educational setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents were two Master Teachers from Vitali National High School who served as instructional leaders and classroom practitioners. They were selected because of their teaching experience, professional expertise, and direct involvement in classroom management, instructional supervision, and learner engagement. Their lived experiences were considered relevant to understanding classroom management, teaching strategies, and student behavior in the digital era. The first participant was a Doctor of Education graduate from Western Mindanao State University, a parent of three children, and an educator with more than a decade of teaching experience, including six years as a Master Teacher across Levels I–III. The second participant was a Master of Education graduate from Western Mindanao State University, a parent of four children, and a Master Teacher Level I with more than a decade of teaching experience and six years of service as a Master Teacher.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study used purposive sampling to select participants who could provide rich and relevant information about the phenomenon. Since qualitative phenomenological research emphasizes depth of understanding rather than statistical representation, the inclusion of two Master Teachers was considered appropriate. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), phenomenological studies commonly involve a small number of carefully selected participants who have directly experienced the phenomenon. Purposive sampling was used because it allows the intentional selection of participants based on qualifications, experiences, and relevance to the study objectives. This technique is appropriate in phenomenological studies because it ensures that participants have direct and substantial experience with the phenomenon under investigation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The participants were selected based on their current Master Teacher position at Vitali National High School, active involvement in classroom instruction and instructional leadership, relevant experience in managing classroom behavior and learner engagement in the digital era, and willingness to participate voluntarily (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study did not aim to generalize findings but to provide an in-depth exploration of the participants' lived experiences.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study used a researcher-made modified semi-structured interview guide as the primary research instrument. This instrument combined open-ended questions with predetermined guide questions, allowing the researcher to adjust the interview flow while ensuring that the study objectives were addressed. It was appropriate for the phenomenological design because it allowed participants to freely narrate their lived experiences while enabling deeper probing of significant responses (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The modified interview guide included probing questions, reflective prompts, and experiential questions designed to elicit rich descriptions of classroom management, teaching strategies, challenges, and coping practices in the digital era. The questions were aligned with the study objectives and encouraged participants to describe their experiences without restriction or leading prompts. The instrument underwent content validation by the researcher's thesis adviser and selected experts in education and qualitative research methodology to improve clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research questions. The guide included introductory questions, main interview questions, and reflective closing questions. It gathered professional background information, explored classroom management experiences and challenges, and encouraged participants to share insights and coping practices. During data gathering, the guide was used flexibly, and with participants' consent, interviews were audio-recorded while field notes were taken to document non-verbal cues and contextual observations.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher followed a systematic and ethically guided data gathering procedure. Before conducting the study, necessary approvals and endorsements were secured from the school principal and relevant Department of Education offices to ensure that institutional and ethical protocols were observed (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After approval, the researcher formally contacted the two selected Master Teacher participants and provided a communication letter and informed consent form explaining the study's purpose, objectives, procedures, and voluntary nature. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, consistent with ethical requirements in qualitative research. Interviews were scheduled at a time and place convenient for the participants within Vitali National High School. The validated modified semi-structured interview guide was used to gather data on their classroom management experiences, teaching strategies, challenges, and coping practices in the digital era. This format allowed participants to narrate their experiences in depth while allowing the researcher to ask follow-up and probing questions. With full consent, interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy and completeness. Field notes were also taken to document non-verbal cues and contextual observations. After the interviews, recordings were securely stored and transcribed verbatim. Field notes were organized to support the recorded data, and all information was handled with confidentiality and anonymity in accordance with ethical research standards (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The interview transcripts and field notes were analyzed thematically to identify meaningful patterns related to the research questions. Thematic analysis was used to organize and interpret the participants' narratives on classroom management experiences, teaching strategies, challenges, coping practices, and insights in the digital era. This process enabled the researcher to present the lived experiences of the Master Teachers while maintaining alignment with the study objectives.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Master Teachers' Experiences in Classroom Management and Digital Teaching

3.1.1 Classroom Management in the Digital Era

The participants emphasized that classroom management in the digital era requires adaptability, resilience, patience, and innovation. They shared that technology has shifted the teacher's role from a traditional transmitter of knowledge to a facilitator of learning who manages engagement and discipline in virtual and blended environments. Both participants identified challenges such as limited internet access, lack of gadgets, online distractions, social media use, games, and unrelated websites. To address these concerns, they established clear classroom rules, structured routines, consistent monitoring, and guidelines on proper gadget use. These findings show that classroom management in the digital era extends beyond discipline and includes facilitation, monitoring, equity, and digital responsibility. The participants' experiences suggest that teachers must manage both learning behavior and access-related barriers, especially in areas affected by unstable connectivity and limited resources. These reflections align with Ghavifekr and Rosdy (2015), who argue that digital classroom management demands flexible strategies and a shift from traditional authority to facilitation. Connectivity issues, particularly in rural or mountainous areas, echo Tortola's (2020) findings that infrastructure gaps remain a major barrier to equitable digital learning in the Philippines. Establishing clear rules and adopting a facilitator role are consistent with Marquez and Oropa (2025), who emphasize structured yet learner-centered approaches in digital pedagogy.

3.1.2 Teaching Strategies in Technology-Integrated Lessons

The participants reported using interactive and technology-supported strategies such as Google Classroom, Kahoot, Mentimeter, online quizzes, group discussions, breakout rooms, recorded lessons, simplified instructions, and follow-up

activities. They emphasized that gamified and collaborative activities increased student motivation, accountability, and participation. Differentiated instruction was also used through varied tasks, recorded materials, simplified directions, and activities suited to learners' abilities and needs. These results indicate that technology-integrated lessons encourage active participation and allow teachers to address different learning needs more flexibly. The use of digital tools supports engagement, personalization, and collaboration, while also requiring teachers to adjust instruction based on student feedback and participation. These strategies reflect Gepullano and Dela Cerna's (2025) findings that interactive learning fosters engagement and respectful debate. Differentiated instruction, through recorded lessons and simplified tasks, resonates with Terletska (2025), who highlights the importance of adaptive learning technologies for diverse learners. The integration of tools such as Zoom, PowerPoint, and DepEd Commons reflects global blended learning practices, where institutional support is critical (Mondal, 2025).

3.1.3 Evolution of Teaching Strategies

The participants described a shift from lecture-based and face-to-face methods to more student-centered, multimedia, and technology-supported approaches. They used Google Classroom, Google Meet, Microsoft PowerPoint, Messenger, Zoom, DepEd Commons, self-paced modules, flipped classrooms, video lessons, online formative assessments, project-based digital outputs, and collaborative online tasks. However, they also noted challenges such as unstable internet connection, limited access to devices, and varying levels of students' digital literacy. The findings suggest that teaching strategies have evolved toward flexible, interactive, and learner-centered models. This shift requires teachers to balance traditional instructional structure with modern digital approaches to ensure accessibility and engagement. This transition mirrors Falasi's (2024) analysis of pedagogical evolution, where student-centered approaches foster collaboration and innovation. Support through webinars, peer mentoring, and Learning Action Cells (LACs) reflects Mondal's (2025) emphasis on professional development as a cornerstone of successful digital adaptation. Falasi (2024) highlights that the evolution of teaching strategies implies a shift from rigid, teacher-centered methods toward flexible, student-centered approaches that integrate technology, collaboration, and active learning. The key implication is that effective pedagogy now requires a hybrid model-blending the structure of traditional methods with the creativity and engagement of modern ones.

3.2 Strategies for Addressing Learner Needs and Student Behavior

3.2.1 Addressing Diverse Learner Needs

The participants highlighted remediation, simplified materials, follow-up messages, printed modules, one-on-one consultations, differentiated activities, digital assessments, reflective journals, online quizzes, digital portfolios, and performance-based outputs as strategies for supporting struggling learners. They emphasized the need to modify and contextualize learning materials based on students' comprehension levels, learning styles, and access to digital tools. These findings show that addressing diverse learner needs requires flexible, inclusive, and responsive teaching practices. Technology supports differentiation, but teachers must still adjust materials and provide alternatives for learners with limited access or lower digital readiness. These practices align with Alojado (2024), who underscores inclusive and empathy-driven instruction. Assessment methods such as digital quizzes, portfolios, and performance-based tasks reflect Levy-Feldman's (2025) advocacy for culturally responsive and equitable assessment practices.

3.2.2 Student Behavior in Digital Learning

The participants observed both positive and problematic student behaviors in digital learning environments. Positive behaviors included independence, creativity, resourcefulness, improved digital literacy, and self-paced learning. However, they also identified lack of focus, late submission of tasks, minimal participation, absenteeism, low responsiveness, and distractions during online discussions. Compared with face-to-face classes, students were described as less expressive and more prone to distraction in digital settings. These results indicate that digital learning can promote autonomy and creativity but may also weaken focus, participation, and accountability when students are not properly guided. Teachers therefore need proactive engagement strategies and clear expectations to support responsible learning behavior. Hansford et al. (2024) emphasize that linking interventions to functional behavioral assessments enhances effectiveness, while meta-analyses of psychosocial interventions confirm that parental cooperation is a critical factor in improving student outcomes.

3.2.3 Managing Behavioral Issues

The participants managed behavioral issues through consistent communication, positive reinforcement, clear expectations, individual check-ins, parent coordination, adjusted learning tasks, counseling, and personalized learning plans. One participant shared that coordinating with parents and providing a personalized learning plan helped improve a disengaged learner's participation and performance. The participants also emphasized that supporting students requires communication with parents and guidance beyond the classroom. These findings suggest that managing behavioral issues in digital learning environments requires both preventive and responsive strategies. Teachers must establish digital norms, encourage self-regulation, use interactive activities, monitor student progress, and strengthen parent-school collaboration. These insights align with Li and Liu (2023), who identify engagement, procrastination, and truancy as key dimensions of online learning behavior. Influencing factors such as technology access and parental support echo Wang et al. (2025), who found that behavioral engagement strongly predicts academic performance.

3.3 Challenges and Professional Insights in the Digital Era

3.3.1 Challenges in Adapting to the Digital Era

The participants identified unfamiliar technologies, stress, time management demands, unstable connectivity, limited gadgets, home environment, and lack of parental support as major challenges in digital-era teaching. They noted that students with stable internet and reliable devices were generally more active and motivated, while those with poor access often experienced frustration, absenteeism, and reduced participation. To cope, the participants attended professional development trainings, participated in LAC sessions, collaborated with colleagues, and relied on support from school leaders and peers. These findings show that adapting to the digital era requires resilience, continuous learning, collaboration, and equity-focused teaching practices. The challenges are not limited to teacher readiness but also include infrastructure, student access, and home support. These experiences resonate with Alfraih (2025), who highlights resilience as essential in coping with technological stressors. Coping mechanisms such as collaboration, webinars, and peer support reflect Giray et al. (2024), who found that Filipino students and teachers often rely on peer networks to manage digital stress.

3.3.2 Insights and Teaching Philosophy

The participants emphasized flexibility, patience, innovation, continuous learning, clear communication, strong relationships, and learner-centered teaching as important lessons gained from their digital-era experiences. They shared that effective classroom management goes beyond physical presence and depends on adaptive instruction, inclusivity, and openness to change. They also expressed the need for improved infrastructure, stronger support systems, equitable access to technology, device availability, internet access, and teacher training. These insights show that digital-era teaching has strengthened the participants' belief in adaptive, inclusive, and learner-centered education. Their teaching philosophy reflects the need for teachers to embrace change gradually while maintaining meaningful relationships and effective pedagogy. Echoing Blake's (2024) advocacy for evidence-based teaching philosophies grounded in practice. Hopes for improvement-better infrastructure, equitable access, and stronger support systems-mirror World Bank reports emphasizing systemic investment in digital education to ensure equity and sustainability.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concludes that effective classroom management in the digital era requires more than the use of technology; it demands adaptability, innovation, resilience, and a learner-centered approach. The experiences of Master Teachers showed that digital tools support interactive teaching strategies, differentiated instruction, student engagement, positive behavior, and stronger parent collaboration. However, challenges such as poor connectivity, digital distractions, and unequal access to technology continue to affect teaching and learning. Despite these barriers, Master Teachers demonstrated resourcefulness through coping practices, continuous professional growth, and improved instructional strategies, showing that successful digital-era classroom management depends on creating inclusive, engaging, responsible, and supportive learning environments.

It is recommended that schools strengthen teacher professional development programs focused on digital pedagogy, classroom management, and technology-supported instruction. Internet connectivity and technological infrastructure should also be improved to ensure equitable and sustainable access to digital learning. Parents should be encouraged to take an active role in supporting students' digital learning behavior, while teachers should continue applying differentiated and inclusive classroom practices to address diverse learner needs. Further qualitative studies involving larger participant groups and varied educational contexts are also recommended to generate broader insights, together with school-based interventions that enhance student engagement and promote responsible digital behavior.

The study was limited to the experiences of Master Teachers in a specific educational context; therefore, its findings may not fully represent the experiences of all teachers or schools in different settings. Since the study was qualitative in nature and focused on a small group of participants, the results provide in-depth insights rather than broad generalizations. Future studies may include larger participant groups and varied school contexts to provide wider perspectives on classroom management, teaching strategies, and student behavior in the digital era.

Compliance with ethical standards

The study observed ethical and institutional protocols during the research process. Necessary approvals and endorsements were secured from the school principal and relevant Department of Education offices before the conduct of the study. The researcher ensured voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and secure handling of recorded and transcribed data.

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