

Testing the Mediating Effect of Teachers' Strategic Thinking Skills on the Relationship Between Behavioral Competence and Preparedness for MATATAG Curriculum Implementation

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ABSTRACT

Effective curriculum implementation relies on teachers' preparedness, which is influenced by their behavioral competence and strategic thinking skills. This study explored the mediating role of teachers' strategic thinking skills in the relationship between behavioral competence and preparedness for implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. A quantitative, descriptive-correlational research design with mediation analysis was employed, involving 170 Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 4 teachers from Lanao del Norte during the 2024–2025 school year. Participants were selected using stratified random sampling. The study aimed to provide insights into how enhancing teachers' behavioral competence and strategic thinking skills can strengthen their preparedness for effective curriculum implementation. Findings revealed that teachers demonstrated high levels of strategic thinking, behavioral competence, and preparedness to implement the MATATAG Curriculum. Behavioral competence—comprising self-management, service orientation, and innovation—was found to have a direct and significant influence on teachers' preparedness for curriculum implementation. Although strategic thinking skills, including systems thinking, reframing, and reflection, were positively correlated with preparedness to implement the MATATAG Curriculum, they did not significantly mediate the relationship between behavioral competence and that preparedness. Moreover, teachers' levels of behavioral competence and preparedness for curriculum implementation remained consistent across age, years of teaching experience, and educational background. This suggests that the structured training and support provided under the MATATAG Curriculum effectively equip teachers to implement it. The study confirms that behavioral competence is a stronger predictor of preparedness, with strategic thinking skills playing a complementary but non-mediating role. These findings highlight the need for targeted professional development and mentoring programs, emphasizing the need for professional development focused on enhancing teachers' self-management, service orientation, and innovation for effective curriculum implementation.

Keywords: *Self-management, Service Orientation, Innovation, Content Knowledge, Pedagogy, Curriculum Planning, Learner's Diversity, Assessment, Reporting*

INTRODUCTION

The Enhanced Basic Education Program aimed to develop 21st-century skills, nationalism, and Filipino values, but national and international assessments revealed significant learning gaps (Almerino et al., 2022; Schleicher, 2022; UNICEF, 2019). In response, DepEd, introduced the MATATAG Curriculum to improve education quality through foundational skills such as literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional learning (Estrellado, 2023), guided by DepEd Order No. 010, s. 2024. Effective implementation depends on teacher preparedness, which extends beyond subject knowledge to include classroom management and curriculum alignment (Pandey, 2018; Ngwenya, 2020).

Early challenges highlighted gaps in teacher support, resistance to change, and limited resources (Lomba-Portela et al., 2022; Kilag, 2024). Teacher preparedness, combined with behavioral competence—self-management, service orientation, and innovation—significantly impacts curriculum implementation (Zhu et al., 2020; Bantoc & Yazon, 2023). Moreover, strategic thinking

skills, including systems thinking, reflection, and rethinking, help teachers adapt to curricular changes and classroom needs (Jelenc & Pisapia, 2015; Mohamad, 2020).

However, limited research explores how strategic thinking mediates the link between preparedness and behavioral competence. This study addresses that gap, emphasizing the importance of integrating strategic thinking to enhance teaching practices under the MATATAG Curriculum. Demographics such as age, experience, and education also influence how teachers develop and apply these skills (Carter et al., 2022; Twohill et al., 2023). Ultimately, aligning preparedness, behavioral competence, and strategic thinking is vital to the success of the MATATAG reform.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This quantitative study used a descriptive-correlational design with mediation analysis to examine the relationships among teachers' behavioral competence, strategic thinking skills, and preparedness in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. Instruments were adapted from DepEd's e-SAT and Pisapia et al.'s (2011) Strategic Thinking Skills Tool, covering demographics, strategic thinking (systems thinking, reframing, reflecting), behavioral competence (self-management, service orientation, innovation), and preparedness (content knowledge, planning, learner diversity, and assessment) in line with DepEd Order No. 10, s. 2024.

Conducted in SY 2024–2025 in selected rural schools in Lanao del Norte, the study targeted Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 4 teachers—key implementers in the MATATAG Curriculum rollout. From 304 eligible teachers (Division Memos Nos. 319 & 297, s. 2024), 170 were selected via proportionate stratified random sampling to ensure district-wide representation.

Ethical protocols were strictly observed, including institutional approval, informed consent, and confidentiality assurances. Data were collected manually with the support of school principals and stored securely. Statistical analyses assessed the strength of relationships among variables and the mediating role of strategic thinking skills.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the teachers

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of teachers based on age, years of service, and educational attainment.

Table 1
Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Teachers in terms of Age, Years of Service, and Highest Educational Attainment

Profile Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age	25-34	92	54.12
	35-44	54	31.76
	45-54	22	12.94
	55 and above	2	1.18
	Total	170	100
Years of Service	0-5	54	31.76
	6-10	44	22.88
	11-15	42	24.70
	16-20	10	5.88
	21 and above	20	11.76
	Total	170	100
	Bachelor's Degree	27	15.88

Highest Attainment	Educational	MA units CAR	100	58.82
		MA full fledge	39	22.94
		PhD units (CAR)	4	2.35
		Total	170	100

The majority of teachers were aged 25-34 years (54.12%), followed by 35-44 years (31.76%), indicating a young workforce. Most teachers had 0-5 years of experience (31.76%), with fewer having 16+ years (17.64%), showing a mix of early and mid-career educators. Regarding education, 58.82% had earned MA units, while 15.88% held only a Bachelor's degree, reflecting a strong commitment to graduate studies. These trends highlight a young, diverse workforce focused on professional development, consistent with ongoing recruitment of younger educators and encouragement of graduate studies (Tantawy, 2020).

The level of strategic thinking skills of teachers

Table 2 presents the mean distribution of teachers' strategic thinking skills (STS) under the dimension of systems thinking, assessing how teachers approach teaching and decision-making in a systematic and long-term manner.

Table 2
Mean Distribution of Teachers' Strategic Thinking Skills (STS): Systems Thinking

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I seek long-term solutions to enhance my teaching skills and effectiveness.	3.55	0.91	High
2. I consider changes in school structure that could improve teaching practices and student performance.	4.00	0.82	High
3. I analyze the overall situation and how different information fits together before focusing on specific teaching and student outcomes.	3.61	0.66	High
4. I try to understand the causes of teaching challenges before deciding on actions.	3.82	0.95	High
5. I explore how my teaching skills, preparedness, and student performance are interconnected within the curriculum.	3.82	0.87	High
OVERALL MEASURE	3.76	0.84	High

Note: 4.21-5.00 Very High; 3.41-4.20 High; 2.61-3.40 Moderate; 1.81-2.60 Low; 1.00-1.80 Very Low

Table 3
Mean Distribution of Teachers' Systems Thinking Skills (STS): Reframing

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
6. I balance past experiences with an open-minded approach to new teaching situations in the MATATAG curriculum, allowing me to learn and adapt.	3.99	0.82	High
7. I use past decisions as one of many resources for addressing teaching challenges, recognizing that each situation may need a different approach.	3.82	0.86	High
8. I explore multiple explanations for how teaching strategies impact student outcomes, rather than settling on just one.	4.01	0.82	High
9. I create an initial plan for teaching issues but seek input from colleagues and students to improve my approach.	2.79	1.01	Moderate
10. I stay open to various solutions for teaching challenges, gathering insights before making well-informed decisions.	3.54	0.90	High
OVERALL MEASURE	3.63	0.88	High

Note: 4.21-5.00 Very High; 3.41-4.20 High; 2.61-3.40 Moderate; 1.81-2.60 Low; 1.00-1.80 Very Low

Table 3 shows that teachers demonstrate strong reframing skills ($M = 3.63$), with the highest-rated item being “I explore multiple explanations for how teaching strategies impact student outcomes” ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.82$), reflecting their openness to diverse instructional approaches. This supports literature emphasizing reframing as vital for adaptive and responsive teaching (Cassidy et al., 2021; Alzghoul et al., 2023).

Table 4
Mean Distribution of Teachers’ Systems Thinking Skills (STS): Reflecting

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
11. I reflect on my teaching experiences to understand my feelings about implementing the MATATAG curriculum.	3.99	0.82	High
12. I think about alternative approaches I could have taken in a teaching situation after it’s resolved.	3.61	0.66	High
13. I consider the reasons behind my successes and failures while teaching the MATATAG curriculum.	3.82	0.95	High
14. I analyze how I resolved teaching problems to learn and improve my practice.	3.82	0.86	High
15. I evaluate my emotions and thoughts about teaching experiences to gain insights into my professional growth.	4.00	0.82	High
OVERALL MEASURE	3.85	0.82	High

Note: 4.21-5.00 Very High; 3.41-4.20 High; 2.61-3.40 Moderate; 1.81-2.60 Low; 1.00-1.80 Very Low

The results show that teachers demonstrate strong reflective thinking skills ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.82$), with consistent engagement in self-evaluation to enhance teaching effectiveness. While most teachers reflect on their practices, there was variability in how they assess the reasons for teaching successes and failures ($SD = 0.95$), likely influenced by experience, feedback, or self-assessment confidence. However, low variability ($SD = 0.66$) in post-lesson reflection suggests a shared commitment to continuous improvement. These findings align with research by Twontawi (2021) and Gupta et al. (2019), highlighting the importance of regular, structured reflection in professional development.

Table 5
Summary Table of Overall Measure of Teachers’ Systems Thinking Skills (STS)

DIMENSIONS	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Systems Thinking	3.76	0.84	High STS
Reframing Skills	3.63	0.88	High STS
Reflecting Skills	3.85	0.82	High STS
Overall Measure	3.75	0.85	High STS

Note: 4.21-5.00 Very High; 3.41-4.20 High; 2.61-3.40 Moderate; 1.81-2.60 Low; 1.00-1.80 Very Low

The findings show that teachers generally exhibit strong strategic thinking skills ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 0.85$), though with some variation. Reflecting Skills scored the highest ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.82$), indicating consistent self-assessment and adjustment of teaching practices. Reframing Skills had the lowest score ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.88$) and greater variability, suggesting that while many teachers are adaptable, some may lack the training to shift perspectives effectively. Systems Thinking showed consistent application with low variability, indicating a shared understanding of teaching dynamics. These differences may stem from unequal access to professional development, with teachers in trainings like the Division Training on Curriculum Integration and the Digitized Learning Resources Workshop showing stronger strategic thinking. These findings align with Weaver et al. (2019), emphasizing the importance of continuous learning for effective, adaptive teaching.

Level of teachers’ behavioral competence

Table 6 presents the mean distribution of teachers' level of behavioral competence in terms of self-management.

Table 6
Mean Distribution of Behavioral Competence in terms of Self-Management

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I set personal goals and directions for my growth	4.06	0.85	High
2. take purposeful actions that align with my goals and the organization's values.	3.94	0.89	High
3. I manage stress well, maintain a positive attitude, and pursue challenging goals enthusiastically.	3.34	1.08	Moderate
4. I prioritize tasks and schedules to achieve my goals.	4.06	0.85	High
5. set quality, challenging, and realistic goals for myself and others (e.g., students, colleagues, or team members).	3.25	0.92	Moderate
OVERALL MEASURE	3.73	0.92	High

Note: 4.21-5.00 Very High; 3.41-4.20 High; 2.61-3.40 Moderate; 1.81-2.60 Low; 1.00-1.80 Very Low

The findings reveal that teachers in Lanao del Norte generally exhibit strong self-management competence ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 0.92$), with effective goal-setting and task prioritization ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.85$). However, there is variability in self-management, particularly in stress management and setting realistic goals for others, which had lower scores ($M = 3.34$ and 3.25) and greater variability. These results may be influenced by participation in professional development programs, such as the Division Training on Goal Setting and Performance Evaluation. The challenges in stress management, exacerbated by heavy workloads, highlight the need for additional support. Research by Fairman et al. (2022), Stronge (2018), and Mohammed et al. (2019) reinforces the importance of goal-setting, emotional resilience, and mental health support in enhancing effective instructional practice.

Table 7
Mean Distribution of Teachers' Behavioral Competence in terms of Service Orientation

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I can clearly explain organizational directions, issues, and problems.	4.06	0.85	High
2. I take responsibility for addressing stakeholders' concerns.	4.06	0.85	High
3. I actively support gender equality through community programs.	3.65	0.66	High
4. I conduct needs assessments and consult with stakeholders to ensure our office's vision, mission, and goals align with DEPED guidelines.	3.89	0.90	High
5. I create service improvement programs with simplified procedures to enhance service delivery.	3.35	1.16	Moderate
OVERALL MEASURE	3.80	0.88	High

Note: 4.21-5.00 Very High; 3.41-4.20 High; 2.61-3.40 Moderate; 1.81-2.60 Low; 1.00-1.80 Very Low

The findings show teachers exhibit a high level of service orientation ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.88$), reflecting strong commitment to stakeholder needs and alignment with institutional goals. The highest-rated item—"can clearly explain organizational directions, issues, and problems" ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.85$)—highlights teachers' ability to communicate school priorities effectively. However, the lowest-rated item—"create service improvement programs with simplified procedures" ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.16$)—suggests challenges in developing efficient systems, with notable variability across responses, indicating differences in training or administrative support. These results align with DepEd initiatives

like the Enhanced School Improvement Plan and School-Based Management, and supporting studies (Zalsos & Corpuz, 2024; Darling-Hammond, 2017) emphasize that clear communication and stakeholder engagement are essential to improving instructional quality and school performance.

Table 8
Mean Distribution of Teachers' Behavioral Competence in Terms of Innovation

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I analyze problems' root causes and suggest effective solutions, promoting new ideas and more efficient processes.	4.06	0.85	High
2. I challenge conventional methods by thinking creatively, aiming to boost my productivity and achieve better results.	3.42	1.11	Moderate
3. I encourage a creative environment and inspire colleagues to come up with original ideas.	4.06	0.85	High
4. I turn creative ideas into practical changes that improve the work unit and organization.	2.82	1.01	Moderate
5. I use innovative strategies to make the most of limited resources, improving work processes and outcomes.	3.59	0.85	High
OVERALL MEASURES	3.59	0.93	Moderate

Note: 4.21-5.00 Very High; 3.41-4.20 High; 2.61-3.40 Moderate; 1.81-2.60 Low; 1.00-1.80 Very Low

The findings reveal a moderate level of innovation among teachers ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 0.93$), with strengths in problem analysis and fostering creativity (both $M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.85$). However, turning creative ideas into practical changes scored lowest ($M = 2.82$, $SD = 1.01$), highlighting difficulties in implementation. The variability suggests uneven capacity across teachers, possibly due to limited resources or institutional barriers. While participation in PLCs and LACs supports creativity, the gap between idea generation and application underscores the need for stronger institutional backing and targeted professional development.

Table 9 summarizes the overall measure of teachers' behavioral competence across three key dimensions: self-management, service orientation, and innovation.

Table 9
Summary of the Overall Measure of Teachers' Behavioral Competence

DIMENSIONS	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Self-Management	3.73	0.92	High
Service Orientation	3.80	0.88	High
Innovation	3.59	0.93	High
Overall Measure	3.71	0.91	High

Note: 4.21-5.00 Very High; 3.41-4.20 High; 2.61-3.40 Moderate; 1.81-2.60 Low; 1.00-1.80 Very Low

The findings indicate that teachers exhibit high overall behavioral competence ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.91$) across self-management, service orientation, and innovation. Service orientation ranked highest ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.88$), reflecting strong stakeholder engagement and accountability, while innovation scored lowest ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 0.93$), highlighting challenges in implementing creative strategies. Variability in responses suggests differences influenced by experience, training, or school context—particularly in resource-limited areas. These results support the positive impact of DepEd's professional development efforts, including the MATATAG Curriculum and LAC sessions, while underscoring the need for more targeted support to strengthen innovation in teaching.

Extent of teachers' preparedness in implementing the MATATAG curriculum

Table 10 presents the mean scores of teachers' preparedness for implementing the MATATAG curriculum in terms of content knowledge and pedagogy.

Table 10
Mean Scores of Teachers' Preparedness for Implementing the MATATAG Curriculum in Terms of Content, Knowledge, and Pedagogy

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I master the subject matter and align my lessons with the core competencies of the MATATAG curriculum.	4.05	0.88	High
2. I sequence learning competencies strategically to ensure structured progress, especially in Mathematics and Language.	3.59	0.61	High
3. I use various teaching methods, like inquiry-based and collaborative approaches, to encourage critical thinking and active learning.	3.94	0.81	High
4. I integrate 21st-century skills, such as problem-solving and digital literacy, into my teaching to boost student engagement and achievement.	3.95	0.91	High
5. I adjust my instruction to meet diverse learning needs, ensuring all students achieve the goals of the MATATAG curriculum.	4.05	0.88	High
OVERALL MEASURE	3.92	0.82	High

Note: 4.21-5.00 Very Great; 3.41-4.20 Great; 2.61-3.40 Moderate; 1.81-2.60 Low; 1.00-1.80 Very Low

The findings show that teachers demonstrate a high level of preparedness ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.82$), reflecting strong subject mastery, instructional strategies, and adaptability in delivering the MATATAG curriculum. They perform best in content mastery and adapting instruction ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.88$), while sequencing learning competencies scored lowest ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 0.61$), particularly in subjects like Math and Language. Moderate variability suggests differences tied to training, experience, or resource access. These results align with MATATAG's focus on strengthening pedagogy and content knowledge, though more support is needed in integrating 21st-century skills and improving access to digital tools.

Table 11
Mean Distribution of Teachers' Preparedness for Implementing the MATATAG Curriculum in Terms of Curriculum and Planning

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I design instructional plans that match the developmental stages of the MATATAG curriculum, ensuring content suits students' cognitive levels.	4.05	0.88	High
2. I create lesson plans that integrate core Filipino values—Maka-Diyos, Makatao, Makakalikasan, and Makabansa—into daily learning.	3.95	0.91	High
3. I adapt my curriculum to include 21st-century skills like critical thinking, creativity, and digital literacy.	4.05	0.88	High
4. I plan differentiated learning strategies to address diverse student needs, making the MATATAG curriculum inclusive and fair for all.	2.95	1.11	Moderate
5. I regularly review and adjust my teaching plans to align with national and global standards in the MATATAG curriculum.	3.49	0.08	High
OVERALL MEASURE	3.70	0.77	High

Note: 4.21-5.00 Very High; 3.41-4.20 High; 2.61-3.40 Moderate; 1.81-2.60 Low; 1.00-1.80 Very Low

The overall mean score of 3.70 (SD = 0.77) shows that teachers are highly prepared in curriculum design and planning under the MATATAG curriculum, particularly in aligning instruction with developmental needs and integrating 21st-century skills (M = 4.05). However, the lowest-rated area—differentiated learning strategies (M = 2.95)—highlights challenges in addressing diverse student needs. While teachers excel in curriculum alignment, there is a clear need for targeted professional development to enhance inclusive teaching practices. These findings support existing research on the importance of both strong content knowledge and the ability to differentiate instruction for effective and inclusive learning.

Table 12
Mean Distribution of Teachers' Preparedness for Implementing the MATATAG Curriculum in Terms of Learners' Diversity

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I design teaching strategies that address the needs of learners with disabilities, giftedness, and talents.	4.05	0.88	High
2. I tailor teaching strategies to accommodate learners with disabilities, giftedness, and talents.	3.59	0.61	High
3. I align my teaching approaches with the MATATAG Curriculum to meet the needs of all students, including those from indigenous groups.	3.94	0.81	High
4. I adapt learning programs to address the unique needs of students with disabilities, giftedness, and from marginalized groups.	3.95	0.91	High
5. I use assessment data to refine my teaching strategies for diverse learners, including those with disabilities, giftedness, and from marginalized groups.	4.05	0.88	High
Overall Measure	3.92	0.82	High

Note: 4.21-5.00 Very High; 3.41-4.20 High; 2.61-3.40 Moderate; 1.81-2.60 Low; 1.00-1.80 Very Low

The highest mean score (M = 4.05, SD = 0.88) was seen in teachers' ability to design inclusive strategies and use assessment data to support diverse learners, reflecting strong adaptability. However, the lowest score (M = 3.59, SD = 0.61) in tailoring strategies to individual needs suggests ongoing challenges in fully personalizing instruction. While teachers value inclusive practices, limited training, resources, and support can hinder effective differentiation. These results align with the MATATAG curriculum's focus on equity and inclusivity and highlight the need for continued professional development to strengthen teachers' capacity to meet diverse learning needs.

Table 13
Mean Distribution of Teachers' Preparedness for Implementing the MATATAG Curriculum in Terms of Assessment and Reporting

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I use various assessment methods to evaluate students' diverse abilities and their mastery of the MATATAG curriculum.	3.49	0.84	High
2. I align my assessments with the MATATAG curriculum's goals to prepare students for academic benchmarks and real-world skills.	4.05	0.88	High
3. I provide personalized feedback to support student growth and address learning gaps.	3.62	0.63	High
4. I report assessment results to school leaders, parents, and stakeholders, following the MATATAG curriculum's guidelines for accountability.	3.89	0.91	High
5. I continuously assess student progress and adjust my teaching strategies to ensure meaningful and curriculum-aligned results.	4.07	0.85	High
Overall Measure	3.82	0.822	High

Note: 4.21-5.00 Very High; 3.41-4.20 High; 2.61-3.40 Moderate; 1.81-2.60 Low; 1.00-1.80 Very Low

The overall mean score of 3.82 (SD = 0.82) indicates that teachers are well-prepared to implement assessment and reporting aligned with the MATATAG curriculum. They excel in monitoring student progress and adjusting instruction (M = 4.07, SD = 0.85), reflecting effective use of formative assessments. However, the lowest-rated area (M = 3.49, SD = 0.84) reveals challenges in using varied assessment methods for diverse learners, pointing to the need for additional training and support. These results align with MATATAG's emphasis on inclusive assessment and highlight the importance of professional development to improve consistency and responsiveness in classroom evaluation practices.

Table 14
Summary Table for the Overall Measure of Teachers' Preparedness for Implementing the MATATAG Curriculum

DIMENSIONS	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Content and Pedagogy	3.92	0.82	High
Curriculum and Planning	3.70	0.77	High
Learning Diversity	3.92	0.82	High
Assessment and Reporting	3.82	0.82	High
OVERALL MEASURE	3.93	0.81	High

Note: 4.21-5.00 Very High; 3.41-4.20 High; 2.61-3.40 Moderate; 1.81-2.60 Low; 1.00-1.80 Very Low

The mean score of 3.93 (SD = 0.81) indicates that teachers are highly prepared to implement the MATATAG curriculum. They show the strongest readiness in Content and Pedagogy and Learning Diversity (M = 3.92), reflecting confidence in subject mastery and inclusive teaching. Curriculum and Planning, while still rated high (M = 3.70), shows some challenges in aligning instruction with evolving standards. These gaps may stem from limited resources or training in differentiated instruction, highlighting areas for targeted support and development.

Significant difference in the teachers' behavioral competence in implementing the MATATAG curriculum

Table 15 displays the results of the test for differences in teachers' behavioral competence across age groups.

Table 15
Test of Difference of the Teachers' Behavioral Competence Based on Their Age

Groups	N	Median	Chi ²	Df	P	Interpretation	Decision
25-34	92	3.6	1.67	3	.643	NS	Accept Ho
35-44	54	3.57					
45-54	22	4.0					
55 above	2	4.0					
Total	170	3.16					

The analysis showed no statistically significant differences in behavioral competence across age groups ($\chi^2 = 1.67$, $p = .643$). While the majority of respondents were aged 25–34 ($n = 92$, median = 3.6), the highest median score of 4.0 came from teachers aged 45–54 ($n = 22$) and 55 and above ($n = 2$). Despite these differences, age was not found to significantly influence competence. This suggests that factors such as professional experience, continuous training, and reflective teaching practices have a greater impact (Nugroho, 2024; Burns, 2020). Supporting studies by Chéron & Kohlbacher (2018),

Casinillo et al. (2021), and Amhag et al. (2019) highlight that both younger and older teachers can achieve similar competence levels through adaptability and professional development. The small sample size in the oldest group may have limited the detection of subtle differences.

Table 16 presents the test of differences in teachers' behavioral competence based on their years of teaching experience.

Table 16
Test of Difference of the Teachers' Behavioral Competence Based on Their Years of Service

Groups	N	Median	Chi ²	Df	P	Interpretation	Decision
0-5	54	3.63	.63	4	.960	NS	Accept Ho
6-10	44	3.6					
11-15	42	3.67					
16-20	10	3.57					
21 above	20	3.8					
Total	170	3.6					

The analysis of behavioral competence by years of service revealed no statistically significant differences across the five experience groups, with median scores ranging from 3.57 to 3.80 ($\chi^2 = 0.63$, $p = .960$). This suggests that years of service do not significantly affect behavioral competence. While experience is often linked to greater adaptability and flexibility (Casinillo et al., 2021), the findings indicate that uniform training, professional development, and support systems contribute to comparable competencies across all experience levels. These results emphasize the importance of ongoing professional development over tenure in shaping teachers' behavioral competence.

Table 17
Test of Difference of the Teachers' Behavioral Competence Based on Their Highest Educational Background

Groups	N	Median	Chi ²	df	P	Interpretation	Decision
Bachelor's degree	27	3.73	4.51	3	0.211	NS	Accept Ho
MA Units-CAR	100	3.6					
PhD Units –CAR	4	3.7					
MA full fledge	39	3.6					
Total	170	3.6					

The analysis revealed no significant differences in behavioral competence based on teachers' highest educational attainment ($\chi^2 = 4.51$, $p = 0.211$), indicating comparable levels of competence across those with bachelor's, master's, or higher degrees. This supports the view that professional experience and ongoing development play a more significant role in behavioral competence than formal education (Casinillo et al., 2021). In the local context, standardized training and capacity-building initiatives by the Department of Education (DepEd) likely contribute to uniform competence levels, with experienced teachers compensating for the absence of advanced degrees through practical classroom experience.

Table 18
Summary Table Measure Test of Difference of the Teachers' Behavioral Competence Based on Their Profile

Profile	Chi ²	Df	P	Interpretation	Decision
Age	1.67	3	.643	NS	Accept Ho
Years of Service	.63	4	.960	NS	Accept Ho
Highest Educational Attainment	4.51	3	0.211	NS	Accept Ho

The Chi-Square Test results show no significant differences in teachers' behavioral competence based on age, years of service, or educational attainment for MATATAG Curriculum implementation. For age ($\chi^2 = 1.67$, $p = 0.643$), years of service ($\chi^2 = 0.63$, $p = 0.960$), and educational attainment ($\chi^2 = 4.51$, $p = 0.211$), the findings align with research suggesting that professional development and experience are more influential than demographic factors. These results highlight the importance of continuing and strengthening MATATAG's training and support systems to ensure effective curriculum delivery.

Teachers' behavioral competence influences their preparedness in implementing the MATATAG curriculum

Table 19
Overall Result of the Regression Analysis of Teachers' Behavioral Competence Influencing their Preparedness in Implementing the MATATAG Curriculum

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Standard error of the estimate	F	P
0.40	0.16	0.15	0.53	10.72	<0.001 Significant

The regression analysis ($R = 0.40$, $R^2 = 0.16$) revealed a moderate positive relationship between teachers' behavioral competence and their preparedness in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. Behavioral competence accounts for 16% of the variance in preparedness, with the remaining 84% influenced by other factors. The regression model was significant ($F = 10.72$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that behavioral competence significantly impacts preparedness. These findings align with studies highlighting the role of self-management, service orientation, and innovation in enhancing teacher preparedness and instructional effectiveness (Sulaiman et al., 2017; Hsiao, 2015; Flower et al., 2017; Sulaiman & Ismail, 2020).

Table 20
Regression Analysis of Teachers' Behavioral Competence (by dimension) Influencing Teachers' Preparedness in Implementing the MATATAG Curriculum

	B	Beta	SE	T	P	Interpretation
Constant	2.46		0.26	9.38	<0.001	Significant
Self-Management	-0.06	-0.06	0.14	-0.41	0.681	NS
Service Orientation	0.02	0.03	0.13	0.17	0.863	NS
Innovation	0.42	0.43	0.13	3.14	0.002	Significant

The regression analysis revealed that self-management ($\beta = -0.06$, $p = 0.681$) and service orientation ($\beta = 0.03$, $p = 0.863$) had no significant effect on teacher preparedness. However, innovation ($\beta = 0.43$, $p = 0.002$) showed a significant positive relationship with preparedness, suggesting that higher innovation levels enhance readiness. These findings partially reject the null hypothesis, confirming that innovation is a key predictor of preparedness, while self-management and service orientation are not. The results align with previous studies that emphasize innovation's importance in adapting teaching methods and improving student engagement (Sulaiman et al., 2017; Sulaiman & Ismail, 2020).

Teachers' behavioral competence influences their strategic thinking skills

Table 21 shows the regression analysis results on the influence of teachers' behavioral competence on their strategic thinking skills.

Table 21
Overall Regression Analysis of Teachers' Behavioral Competence Influencing Teachers' Strategic Thinking Skills

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Standard error of the estimate	F	P
0.22	0.05	0.03	0.54	2.75	0.044 significant

The regression analysis showed a weak positive correlation ($R = 0.22$) between teachers' behavioral competence and strategic thinking, with behavioral competence explaining only 5% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.05$). The significant but weak relationship ($F = 2.75$, $p = 0.044$) suggests other factors contribute more to strategic thinking. These findings align with studies by Twontawi (2021), Shaked et al. (2017), and Nuraeni et al. (2021), which highlighted the role of behavioral competence in enhancing strategic thinking. Although the model explains a small portion of the variance, it suggests that professional development focused on self-management and innovation could improve teachers' strategic thinking and preparedness for the MATATAG Curriculum.

Table 22 presents the results of a regression analysis conducted to determine the influence of teachers' behavioral competence on their strategic thinking skills.

Table 22
Regression Analysis of Teachers' Behavioral Competence Influencing Teachers' Strategic Thinking Skills

	B	Beta	SE	T	P	Interpretation
Constant	3.01		0.27	11.19	<0.001	Significant
Self-Management	0.12	0.14	0.14	0.84	0.405	NS
Service Orientation	-0.02	-0.02	0.14	-0.14	0.89	NS
Innovation	0.10	0.11	0.14	0.74	0.461	NS

The regression analysis showed that teachers have a baseline level of strategic thinking (constant value = 3.01, $p < 0.001$), independent of their behavioral competence. The individual components—self-management, service orientation, and innovation—had weak or insignificant effects on strategic thinking (self-management: $B = 0.12$, $p = 0.405$; service orientation: $B = -0.02$, $p = 0.89$; innovation: $B = 0.10$, $p = 0.461$). However, the overall regression model ($F = 2.75$, $p = 0.044$) indicated a weak but significant influence of behavioral competence on strategic thinking. This suggests that when considered together, these dimensions have a subtle impact on strategic thinking.

This may be due to the complex interaction of behavioral competence dimensions and other factors shaping strategic thinking. Previous research, such as Shaked and Schechter (2017), suggests that strategic thinking is influenced by cognitive, situational, and collaborative factors, not just behavioral traits. For the MATATAG Curriculum, improving strategic thinking should involve a comprehensive approach, integrating reflective thinking, systems thinking, and collaborative decision-making in teacher development programs.

Teachers' strategic thinking skills influence preparedness in implementing the MATATAG curriculum

Table 23 presents the overall regression analysis examining the influence of teachers' strategic thinking skills on their preparedness to implement the MATATAG Curriculum.

Table 23
Overall Regression Analysis of Teachers' Strategic thinking skills Influencing their Preparedness in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum.

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Standard error of the estimate	F	p
0.26	0.07	0.05	0.55	4.03	0.008 significant

The analysis shows a low positive correlation ($R = 0.26$) between teachers' strategic thinking skills and preparedness, explaining only 7% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.07$). The adjusted R^2 of 0.05 and standard error of 0.55 indicate moderate prediction error, while the significant F-statistic ($p = 0.008$) confirms a weak but significant effect. These findings align with previous research, such as Sloan (2019), Harris et al. (2017), and Shaked and Schechter (2017), which highlight the role of strategic thinking in leadership and adaptability. Table 24 presents the regression analysis, showing how systems thinking, reframing, and reflecting skills influence preparedness for the MATATAG Curriculum.

Table 24
Regression Analysis of Teachers' Strategic thinking skills Influencing their Preparedness in Implementing the MATATAG Curriculum.

	B	Beta	SE	T	P	Interpretation
Constant	2.85		0.30	9.44	<0.001	Significant
Systems Thinking	0.04	0.04	0.20	0.21	0.835	NS
Reframing Skills	0.17	0.18	0.16	1.07	0.285	NS
Reflecting Skills	0.05	0.05	0.21	0.24	0.808	NS

Table 24 presents a regression analysis on the influence of teachers' strategic thinking skills on preparedness for the MATATAG Curriculum. The baseline preparedness value of 2.85 ($p < 0.001$) indicates other contributing factors. Individual strategic thinking skills—systems thinking, reframing, and reflecting—show no significant effect on preparedness (p -values: 0.835, 0.285, 0.808). However, the overall model explains 7% of the variance in preparedness, supporting a holistic view of strategic thinking (Sloan, 2019; Shaked & Schechter, 2017). The findings suggest that professional development should integrate systems thinking, reframing, and reflection to enhance preparedness, in line with Valencia and Pañares (2021).

Mediating effect of teachers' strategic thinking skills on the relationship between behavioral competencies and preparedness in implementing the MATATAG curriculum

Table 25 presents the mediation analysis, examining whether teachers' strategic thinking skills (ST) mediate the relationship between teachers' behavioral competence (TBC) and their preparedness in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum (PIM).

Table 25

Mediating Effect of Teachers' Strategic Thinking Skills on the Relationship between Teachers' Behavioral Competence and Teachers' Preparedness in Implementing the MATATAG Curriculum

Effect	Path	Estimate (B)	SE	t-value	p-value	Remarks
Indirect	TBC→ ST→ PIM	.04	.02	1.85	.065	NS
Direct	TBC→PIM	.32	.07	4.56	<.001	Significant
Total	TBC→PIM	.36	.07	5.14	<.001	Significant

Note:

ST - Teachers' Strategic

TBC - Teachers' Behavioral Competence

PIC- Preparedness in Implementing the MATATAG Curriculum

Table 25 examines the mediating effect of strategic thinking skills on the relationship between behavioral competence and preparedness for implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. While behavioral competence significantly impacts preparedness ($B = 0.36$, $p < .001$), the indirect effect of strategic thinking ($B = 0.04$, $p = .065$) is not significant, suggesting that strategic thinking does not mediate this relationship. This finding highlights that teachers can demonstrate behavioral competence without engaging in strategic thinking, pointing to a gap in professional development. It emphasizes the need to focus on strengthening core competencies—self-management, service orientation, and innovation—as key factors for teacher preparedness in curriculum reforms like MATATAG.

Figure 2 illustrates the relationships between these variables.

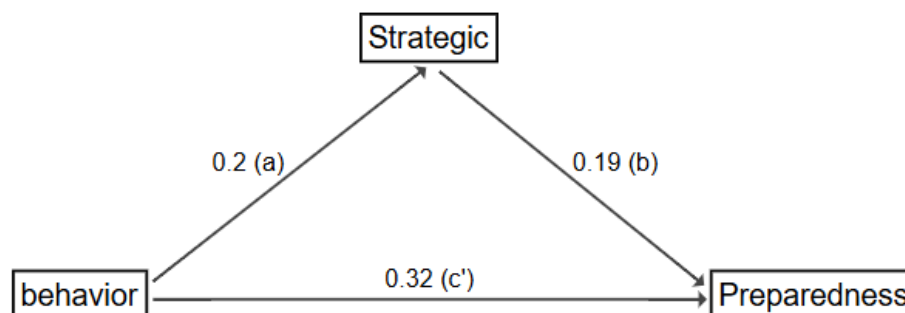


Figure 2. Path Model Diagram

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Standard error of the estimate	F	P
0.21	0.05	0.04	0.54	7.94	.005

Figure 2 illustrates a path model showing that the relationship between behavioral competence, strategic thinking, and preparedness for the MATATAG Curriculum explains only 5% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.05$). Despite its weak explanatory power, the model's statistical significance ($F = 7.94$, $p = 0.005$) confirms a genuine relationship with preparedness, suggesting that factors like institutional support and resources also contribute. The model highlights the direct impact of behavioral competence—self-management, service orientation, and innovation—on preparedness, emphasizing

the need for professional development. While strategic thinking did not mediate the relationship, integrating skills like systems thinking, reframing, and reflection may indirectly enhance preparedness. The study also underscores the importance of external factors, such as school leadership and resources, in improving teacher preparedness for the MATATAG Curriculum.

A training plan was proposed based on the results of the study, ‘Capacity Building on Behavioral Competence for Effective Implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum’

Rationale

The successful implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum relies on teachers' preparedness, which is influenced by their behavioral competence. A study among Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 4 teachers in Lanao del Norte found that self-management, service orientation, and innovation directly impact preparedness, while strategic thinking complements but doesn't mediate it. This training aims to enhance these competencies for effective MATATAG implementation.

Objectives:

By the end of the training, participants will be able to:

1. Improve self-management for classroom preparedness.
2. Apply service-oriented, learner-centered practices.
3. Integrate innovation into teaching.
4. Use strategic thinking skills for planning and decision-making.
5. Prepare lesson plans and action plans aligned with MATATAG curriculum.

Participants: Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 4 Teachers

Duration: 6 weeks

Training Matrix

Week	Theme	Topics	Learning Delivery Mode	Expected Output	Resource Person
Week 1	Self-Management	Workshop: Stress & Time Management, Goal Setting, Daily Reflection	LAC/Workshop	Personal Development Plan	School Head/Master Teacher
Week 2	Service Orientation	Role-play: Empathy Building, Case Discussion on Learner Needs	Simulation/Group Sharing	Reflective Journal & Group Report	School Head/Master Teacher Guidance Counselor/Teacher
Week 3	Innovation in Teaching	Demo: Creative Teaching Strategies Using Localized Materials	Hands-on Workshop	Innovative Lesson Plan	District Demonstration Teacher
Week 4	Strategic Thinking	Activities: Systems Thinking Map, Reframing Scenarios, Reflective Dialogue	Group Task & Analysis	MATATAG Curriculum Action Plan	School Head/Lead Teacher
Week 6	Coaching/Follow-up	Application Monitoring, Sharing of Best Practices, Reflection on Implementation	Coaching & Feedback	Consolidated Output Portfolio	School Head or Assigned Coach

Monitoring and Evaluation

Activity	Tool	Frequency
Pre- and Post-Assessment	Behavioral Competence Checklist	Beginning & End of Training
Observation of Classroom Outputs	Observation Tool, Peer Review	After Week 4 & Follow-up
Coaching and Reflection Logs	Coaching Notes, Self-Reflection Template	Week 6
Training Feedback	Training Evaluation Form	End of Each Session

CONCLUSION

The study confirms that teachers' behavioral competence positively influences their preparedness for curriculum implementation. Teachers with strong self-regulation, service orientation, and innovation are better equipped to deliver the MATATAG curriculum, supporting Bandura's theory that self-efficacy enhances performance and adaptability.

A weak positive relationship was also found between teachers' strategic thinking skills and preparedness, suggesting that cognitive processes like systems thinking, reframing, and reflection contribute to readiness. However, strategic thinking did not mediate the relationship between behavioral competence and preparedness, highlighting that behavioral competence is the primary factor shaping preparedness.

The study proposes a model where behavioral competence directly impacts preparedness, with strategic thinking serving a supportive role. Strengthening self-management, service orientation, and innovation through professional development is key. The findings also indicate that consistent teacher preparedness across various demographics reflects the effectiveness of MATATAG training.

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