

## Research skills and challenges in the conduct of action research: Basis for a proposed training program

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**Abstract:** The conduct of action research has gained significant importance among teachers and administrators today, emerging as a key focus for professional development. Engaging in action research enables them to act as change agents, fostering development in every classroom they oversee. This study determines the teachers' research skills and challenges which was the basis for a proposed program. It includes investigating the level of manifestation of the teacher's competence motivation along with cognitive aspects, behavioral aspects, and affective aspects. It also delves into the teachers' coping mechanism in conducting action research in terms of financial, time requirements, and availability of an expert. The level of teachers' research skills in the conduct of action research was also determined a training program was proposed based on the results of the study. The findings reveal a strong motivation and positive attitude among teachers towards action research, with a clear desire to learn, reflect, and enhance their teaching practices. While teachers exhibit proficiency in selecting topics and planning projects, there are identified areas for growth, particularly in data analysis techniques, ethical considerations, and publication practices. The study also highlights the interplay of teachers' competence motivation, coping mechanisms, and research skills, suggesting that addressing challenges and enhancing motivation can lead to improved research outcomes. These results underscore the importance of providing teachers with adequate support, resources, and training to enhance their action research skills and foster a culture of inquiry and continuous improvement in education.

Keywords: Research, Skills, Challenges

Date Submitted: May 16, 2025

Date Accepted: May 28, 2025

Date Published: June 10, 2025

## INTRODUCTION

The conduct of action research has gained significant importance and is now a major focus for the professional development of teachers and administrators. Conducting action research allows them to act as catalysts for change and fosters classroom development. Identifying classroom problems provides opportunities to innovate and implement improvement solutions (Oestar & Marzo, 2022). Action research allows teachers to learn about themselves, their students, and their colleagues. It also helps them to determine and continually improve their teaching and learning processes.

Individuals who are engaged in the task of education have to face different challenges that hinder children's education. Thus, teachers need to find solutions to such difficulties based on their investigation as this process will immediately point out remedial measures to be adopted. In this regard, one scientific method to address these problems is the implementation of research-based plans and solutions in schools. (Jha, 2022).

Bongcayao (2023) stressed that teachers as front liners of basic education may conduct action research to assess their teaching practices, reflect on learning outcomes, and generate practical ways of improving their pedagogical competence through innovations and interventions

that will result in positive educational impact and school effectiveness. Meanwhile, it is also presented that still many teachers are experiencing difficulties in the conduct of action research from the identification of their research problem until the publication of the results of the research. The results may imply that teachers do not yet possess the required skills in writing action research.

Moreover, according to Bullo (2021), conducting educational research has become one of the most challenging tasks for most teachers, especially because it has been additional work for them. Their study revealed that most of the respondents encountered challenges in conducting research like the lack of time, having anxieties in writing and conducting the study, and perceived research as an additional burden on their part.

The Department of Education (DepEd) encourages teachers to conduct school-based action research as an inclusion to their performance appraisal. Similarly, in higher educational institutions, teachers are directed to perform better in classroom teaching and publishing academic papers because of the "publish or perish" mentality. Therefore, aside from daily instructions, conducting research has become a part of their functions in their respective institutions. The DepEd issued DepEd Order No. 39, series of 2016, which outlines the revised guidelines on the Basic Education Research Agenda. This mandate encourages educators to conduct research in classrooms, investigate issues, concerns, and problems in the teaching and learning process, and provide interventions based on the results and findings.

DepEd Order No. 8 series of 2023 provides guides on the performance of teachers and as stipulated in their Individual Teachers' Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF), teachers are required to do action research as a part of their annual performance appraisal. It is under the key result areas on professional growth and development, which is five percent of the individual teachers' evaluation score. However, the lack of necessary knowledge on doing action research among teachers in Philippine public elementary and secondary schools may limit its popularity (DepEd Order No. 39, s. 2016). Because of the growing difficulties and concerns in many areas of the teaching and learning process, the number of teachers undertaking action research in DepEd has risen over the years. In addition to this, the competition for professional growth and promotion is very tight in DepEd. One of the criteria in the computation of points during ranking, as stipulated in DepEd Order No. 66, s. 2007 or the Revised Guidelines on the Appointment and Promotion of Other Teaching, Related Teaching, and Non-Teaching Positions is to have an outstanding performance.

Despite legal mandates from higher authorities and the necessary competencies required for teachers, some educators struggle to address classroom issues effectively due to a lack of skills in conducting action research. This challenge motivated the researcher to explore educators' competence in research skills and the obstacles they faced in conducting action research. The findings from this study could serve as the basis for a proposed training program, specifically targeting teachers in the Tubod District, Division of Surigao del Norte.

### *Problem Statement*

This study determined the research skills and challenges of teachers in the conduct of action research. Specifically, it sought to answer the following sub-problems:

1. What is the level of manifestation of the teacher's competence in doing action research along:
  - 1.1 Cognitive Aspects,
  - 1.2 Behavioral Aspects,
  - 1.3 Affective Aspects?

2. What is the level of manifestation of coping mechanisms encountered by the teachers in doing action research in terms of:
  - 2.1 Financial,
  - 2.2 Time requirements
  - 2.3 Availability of an expert?
3. What is the level of Teacher's Research Skills in the conduct of Action Research in terms of:
  - 3.1 Selecting Action Research Topic
  - 3.2 Planning an Action Research Project
  - 3.3 Analyzing and Presenting Action Research Data.
  - 3.4 Integrating Ethics in Action Research
  - 3.5 Reflecting on and Communicating Results of Action Research
4. Is there a significant association between the level of manifestation of the teachers' competence motivation and the level of Teacher's Research Skills in the conduct of action research?
5. Is there a significant association between the level of coping mechanisms by the teachers in doing action research and the level of Teacher's Research Skills in the conduct of action research?
6. Based on the results of the study, what training program can be proposed?

### *Theoretical framework*

In this study, the researcher utilized the Theory of Competence proposed by Susan Harter (1978). This theory provides a framework for understanding accomplishment motivation, focusing on an individual's subjective perception of their competence.

Harter's theory suggests that individuals' effectiveness or motivation can vary across different areas of performance, such as cognitive, physical, and social domains. People are motivated to achieve mastery in various areas to enhance their skills or demonstrate their proficiency.

Harter's framework includes a developmental aspect, suggesting that individuals who succeed in their initial attempts at mastering a task and receive positive reinforcement develop an internal self-reward system and mastery-focused goals. On the other hand, individuals who consistently struggle in their initial attempts or receive negative feedback will have a diminished sense of competence and control in that area, continuing to rely on external sources to assess their performance and motivate themselves.

Applying Harter's theory to the teachers or respondents in this study, their motivation to conduct action research depends on positive factors or challenges that shape their efforts toward competence or mastery in action research. Therefore, considering challenges as a variable could provide significant insights into individuals' efforts in their research projects.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Research design*

A descriptive correlational design is a non-experimental research method that aims to describe the relationship between two or more variables without manipulating them. This design involves collecting data to identify patterns and relationships between variables, providing a quantitative measure of the strength and direction of associations. However, it does not establish causal

relationships. The primary goal is to observe and describe existing relationships as they naturally occur. The descriptive correlational design is appropriate for this study as it investigated the significant association between the level of teacher's competence motivation and level of research skills as well as the association between the level of coping mechanisms to challenges encountered by the teachers in doing action research and the level of research skills.

#### *Locale of Study*

The setting of this study was at Tubod District, Division of Surigao del Norte.

#### *Respondents of the study*

The population of this study were the 84 teachers of Tubod District, Division of Surigao del Norte. Out of the 84 teachers, the study chose 78 of them as the respondents of the study. The said respondents had at least 3 years of teaching in the public school in a regular permanent position. They had at least a background or training in the aspect of action research.

#### *Selection and Description of Respondents*

This study utilized purposive sampling, also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, a form of non-probability sampling where researchers select participants based on their judgment. This method requires researchers to have prior knowledge of the study's purpose to appropriately select and approach eligible participants. Purposive sampling allows researchers to target a specific subset of individuals, ensuring that all survey respondents fit a particular profile (Serra 2018). In this study, purposive sampling was appropriately used as the researcher selectively identified teachers of Tubod District, Division of Surigao del Norte who had at least 3 years teaching experienced and they had at least a background or training in action research.

#### *Data Gathering Instruments*

This study utilized a researcher-constructed survey questionnaire, developed based on the theory of Harter (1978). The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first part assessed the level of manifestation of teachers' competence and motivation in terms of cognitive, behavioral, and affective aspects. The second part evaluated the level of teachers' competence in conducting action research, including selecting an action research topic, planning an action research project, analyzing, and presenting action research data, integrating ethics in action research, and reflecting on and communicating the results of action research. The last part of the questionnaire which used a qualitative approach in dealing with the respondents includes the coping mechanisms encountered by the participants on financial, time requirements, and availability of experts.

#### *Data Gathering Procedure*

The conduct of the study started with the crafting of the survey questionnaire which was based on theory and the variables outlined in the statement of the problem. Once the questionnaire was crafted, it underwent a validation process by identified expert validators. A letter of intent for the validation process was sent to the Schools Division Superintendent.

After incorporating the suggested improvements from the validators, the finalized survey questionnaire was distributed to the identified participants. Before administering the instrument, a letter of intent was drafted and addressed to the respondents, with copies sent to their head of office or principal. Upon receiving approval, the researcher administered the survey questionnaire to the target respondents.

All respondents were given ample time to complete the survey questionnaire. Additionally, interviews or focus group discussions were conducted as necessary to validate responses and clarify any questions. If respondents were unavailable for face-to-face interactions due to their location, an online survey was created and sent via messenger or email to collect the needed data. Moreover, telephone or video call sessions were conducted if further clarification of the data provided was required, especially regarding the coping mechanisms in conducting action research. Following the data collection, the research statistician assisted with the interpretation of the data. The results were presented after the research was finalized.

#### *Data Analysis Procedure*

After the data were gathered, they were tabulated and consolidated in terms of the parts of the survey questionnaire. The study employed two primary statistical treatments to analyze the data: Weighted Mean and Spearman Rho. The Weighted Mean was utilized to compute the average scores of respondents' self-assessed competence across various aspects of conducting action research, including topic selection, project planning, data analysis and presentation, ethical integration, and reflection and communication of results. This method allowed for a clear measurement of perceived skill levels in each domain. Meanwhile, Spearman Rho was used to determine the strength and significance of associations between key variables. Specifically, it assessed the relationship between teachers' competence motivation and their research skills, as well as the correlation between coping mechanisms used in addressing research-related challenges and the overall level of research competence. These statistical tools provided both descriptive and inferential insights into the dynamics of teachers' action research capabilities and their adaptive responses.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### *Level Of Manifestation of The Teacher's Competence Motivation In Doing Action Research Along Cognitive Aspects, Behavioral Aspects, Affective Aspects.*

The study reveals that teachers demonstrate a consistently high level of competence motivation in conducting action research across cognitive, behavioral, and affective domains, as indicated by overall weighted means of 4.07, 4.04, and 4.02, respectively. These values reflect strong agreement and positive disposition toward engaging in action research as a tool for reflection, professional growth, and instructional improvement.

In the cognitive aspect, the highest-rated item—"I am motivated to learn the concept of action research to know how to reflect on my teaching practices" ( $M = 4.19$ )—underscores the participants' proactive attitude towards reflective learning. Conversely, the lowest mean ( $M = 3.97$ ) highlights moderate variability in teachers' confidence in their ability to grasp new concepts, indicating the need for continuous cognitive support. These findings align with Tindowen et al. (2019), who emphasized that factors like workload and inadequate understanding may hinder teachers' full engagement with research.

For the behavioral aspect, respondents showed the strongest motivation ( $M = 4.15$ ) toward acquiring actionable research skills, signaling their desire to utilize action research as a practical tool in teaching. The lowest mean ( $M = 3.90$ ), related to enjoyment of research challenges, suggests variability in respondents' readiness to embrace complex research tasks. This highlights the importance of scaffolding research involvement to support less confident teachers—echoing

Behforouz et al.'s (2023) observation on diminished teacher research participation due to lack of time, training, and methodological clarity.

In the affective domain, the highest-rated item ( $M = 4.21$ ) indicates that teachers value action research as a meaningful vehicle for self-reflection and professional identity reinforcement. The lowest mean ( $M = 3.88$ ) still denotes agreement but reveals potential gaps in perceived satisfaction upon completing research tasks, suggesting a need to enhance institutional recognition and reward mechanisms. This finding complements Tingabgab and Binayao's (2023) study, which documented teachers' emotional and motivational struggles during action research.

Overall, the results affirm that teachers in the study are highly motivated to engage in action research but face underlying challenges that may temper their confidence and satisfaction. Addressing these through targeted professional development, methodological training, and supportive environments is crucial to sustaining teacher research engagement and maximizing its impact on practice.

### *Extent of the Teachers' Coping Mechanisms to Challenges Encountered in Conducting Action Research*

The analysis reveals that while teachers conducting action research face notable challenges, they also demonstrate strong coping mechanisms supported by institutional efforts. In terms of financial challenges, teachers showed a high level of confidence in managing research budgets, as evidenced by the highest mean score of 3.69 for their ability to create itemized financial plans. This suggests that many respondents possess solid financial planning skills, a critical competency for executing research projects. However, the lowest mean score of 3.39, which pertains to receiving support from private funding institutions, indicates a disparity in access to financial assistance. The variability in responses highlights unequal opportunities among teachers in securing external funding, suggesting the need for more inclusive and equitable research support systems. Institutions could address this gap by establishing stronger partnerships with private funders and implementing policies that ensure broader access to financial resources for teacher-researchers. These findings align with Abrenica and Cascolan's (2022) study, which identified budget constraints as a primary barrier to effective action research in schools.

Regarding time management, teachers generally agreed that they were able to conduct research alongside their regular teaching duties, particularly when their principals supported scheduling efforts, as reflected by the highest mean score of 3.76. This suggests that administrative coordination plays a crucial role in facilitating research productivity. Nevertheless, the lowest-rated item in this domain, with a mean score of 3.50, revealed difficulties in balancing personal obligations with research responsibilities. The variability in responses indicates that some teachers continue to struggle with integrating research into their daily lives. This supports Aguilar-de Borja's (2018) assertion that time constraints—compounded by emotional and psychological stress—are a significant obstacle for teachers. To address this, schools may consider implementing flexible scheduling, time management workshops, and wellness programs to support teachers' dual responsibilities and promote a healthier work-life-research balance.

In terms of expert availability, the findings show that teachers feel generally supported by knowledgeable individuals, such as principals or fellow educators, in conducting action research. The highest-rated item, with a mean score of 3.87, indicated that respondents were confident in their access to someone well-versed in action research methodologies. However, the availability of designated research coordinators at the school or district level showed slightly lower agreement

( $M = 3.63$ ), suggesting inconsistency in the support structures available to teachers. This lack of uniform access to expert guidance may affect the quality and continuity of research initiatives across schools. Abelardo (2019) similarly noted that inadequate training and the absence of designated research personnel remain key challenges that hinder teacher engagement in research. Addressing these issues through systematic training, the formalization of research coordinator roles, and consistent mentorship programs could enhance research quality and sustain motivation among teacher-researchers.

In sum, while teachers in the study exhibit commendable resilience and initiative in managing financial, time, and support-related challenges, the findings underscore the critical role of institutional interventions. Providing equitable funding opportunities, optimizing time allocation, and ensuring the consistent availability of expert guidance are essential strategies to create an enabling research environment. These measures can empower teachers to engage more effectively in action research, ultimately enriching teaching practices and advancing educational outcomes.

#### *Level of Teacher's Research Skills in the Conduct of Action Research*

The findings from the analysis of teachers' research skills in conducting action research across five domains, selecting a topic, planning, analyzing data, integrating ethics, and communicating results, highlight a generally high level of proficiency among educators, with key implications for sustained professional development.

In selecting an action research topic, teachers demonstrated high levels of confidence and skill, particularly in creating research projects aligned with their professional goals, with a weighted mean of 3.99 for the highest-rated indicator. This suggests that training and exposure to action research principles have equipped educators to identify relevant, impactful research problems. However, a lower mean score of 3.69 in identifying topic selection as a routine part of their job indicates variability in familiarity and comfort with the process. Toquero (2021) and Cortes (2019) support these findings by emphasizing the need for enhanced skills in problem conceptualization and the formulation of relevant research questions.

In planning action research projects, teachers also showed high proficiency, particularly in ensuring their research is grounded in practical classroom issues. The highest-rated item, with a mean of 3.96, confirmed that teachers value the real-world applicability of their research. However, limitations emerged in understanding and using various data collection instruments, as reflected by the lowest mean of 3.71. This underscores the need for continued training in both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, a finding consistent with Albalawi and Johnson (2022), who highlighted teachers' perceived competence in designing research plans.

Teachers' ability to analyze and present action research data was another strong area, with a highest mean of 3.95 for planning data collection and a robust overall mean of 3.78. Nevertheless, identifying qualitative analysis techniques scored the lowest (3.71), pointing to a training gap in qualitative data literacy. The study aligns with Dignos (2021), who observed moderate skills among teachers in data interpretation and tool utilization. Enhancing these competencies is crucial for drawing meaningful insights from both qualitative and quantitative data.

Regarding ethics, teachers showed an impressive understanding of ethical standards in action research, with the highest-rated item (4.08) related to recognizing potential ethical issues in research design. However, a lower mean (3.74) in identifying ethical lapses during data analysis suggests a specific area for improvement. These findings emphasize the importance of ethics-

focused training programs, consistent with Comon & Corpuz (2024), who advocate for researchers' ethical mindfulness and integrity throughout the research process.

In reflecting on and communicating results, teachers reported confidence in scholarly writing, with a top score of 3.74. However, they expressed less confidence in converting manuscripts into publishable articles (3.65), indicating a need for professional development in navigating the publication process. This supports Manfra (2019), who reported teachers' struggles with academic dissemination and emphasized the value of publication skills training.

Overall, while teachers exhibit commendable proficiency in conducting action research, consistent support and targeted professional development are necessary to address skill gaps. These include enhanced training in qualitative analysis, ethical data interpretation, and academic publication. By institutionalizing these supports, schools can foster a more capable, confident, and impactful community of teacher-researchers, ultimately advancing teaching practices and educational outcomes.

*Significant association between the Level of Teacher's Competence Motivation as well as the coping mechanisms to challenges they encountered and the Level of Research skills*

The correlation analysis reveals significant associations between teachers' competence motivation and their research skills across all domains of action research. Each aspect of competence motivation—cognitive, behavioral, and affective—exhibited statistically significant positive correlations with all five dimensions of research skills, including selecting an action research topic, planning a project, analyzing and interpreting data, integrating ethics, and reflecting and communicating results. These associations, indicated by p-values less than the 0.05 level of significance, led to the rejection of the null hypothesis, suggesting that increased competence motivation is strongly linked to enhanced research capabilities among teachers.

This result underscores several important implications for educational practice. Primarily, it affirms the role of professional development initiatives aimed at boosting teacher motivation as a pathway to improving research competence. Curriculum developers and school leaders are encouraged to integrate motivational strategies such as collaborative research projects, mentoring opportunities, and recognition systems that reward research accomplishments. These strategies not only cultivate a thriving research culture but also promote continuous improvement in instructional quality.

Furthermore, the findings imply that personal drive and institutional support must work in tandem. Teachers with high intrinsic motivation are more likely to pursue professional growth, while newer teachers particularly benefit from structured mentorship and skill-building support. Experienced teachers, on the other hand, can be empowered to take leadership roles in research mentoring. School heads, as outlined in Republic Act 9155 and reinforced by DepEd Orders No. 16 (2015), No. 39 (2016), and No. 24 (2020), play a vital role in facilitating a research-conducive environment by providing resources, fostering collaboration, and involving teachers in school-level decision-making processes.

The broader impact of enhanced teacher research skills extends to student learning, as more competent and research-active teachers are better equipped to innovate and refine pedagogical strategies. This is echoed in Ulla's (2018) study, which found that while Filipino public school teachers recognize the value of research, they face hurdles such as limited funding, heavy teaching loads, and insufficient training. Boran (2018) further noted that supportive work conditions, respect, autonomy, and involvement in decision-making significantly boost teacher motivation.

Addressing these systemic issues through targeted support and policy implementation is essential in sustaining teacher motivation and research engagement.

In conclusion, fostering teachers' competence motivation not only improves their research skills but also catalyzes positive transformation in teaching practices and educational outcomes. Strategic investment in motivational and research-support structures can yield long-term benefits for teachers' professional development and for the broader education system.

*Correlation analysis between the Level of Coping Mechanisms to Challenges Encountered by the Teachers in Doing Action Research and the Level of Research Skills*

The results reveal a significant association between teachers' coping mechanisms and their level of research skills in conducting action research. The correlation analysis indicates that for all aspects—financial, time requirement, and availability of experts—the correlation coefficients are highly significant, as reflected by the p-values all falling within the .05 level of significance. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis and confirms that as teachers enhance their coping mechanisms, their research skills similarly improve. This result implies that teachers who are better equipped to manage the challenges of action research also tend to exhibit stronger research competencies.

The findings suggest that coping mechanisms—such as financial management, effective time allocation, and access to research experts—play a vital role in enabling teachers to strengthen their research capabilities. Teachers who actively implement these strategies demonstrate greater confidence and skill in various aspects of research, including topic selection, project planning, data analysis, ethical integration, and result dissemination. This underlines the need to integrate coping mechanism training into professional development programs. By doing so, educational institutions can not only improve teachers' research outcomes but also promote their overall well-being and resilience.

Moreover, the findings imply that schools and educational leaders should offer ongoing support mechanisms such as mentorship, access to research resources, and collaborative communities to empower teachers. These support systems not only help in coping with research challenges but also cultivate a culture of continuous professional development. Observations further suggest that teachers who proactively manage stress and seek help from peers tend to achieve higher levels of research productivity and success.

This aligns with the study by Basas and Pacadaljen (2021), which revealed that gaps in administrators' research management competencies can impede effective teacher support. Their limited experience in research implementation and data management highlights the necessity of enhancing administrators' orientation and involvement in research. Similarly, the study by Taghap and Boyonas (2023) emphasizes that establishing interpretative communities and administrative backing are pivotal in fostering a research-driven teaching profession. When administrators provide resources, encouragement, and recognition, teachers are more likely to pursue and excel in research initiatives.

Overall, this study highlights the strong correlation between coping strategies and research skills, calling for a holistic and supportive research environment within schools. By addressing both the personal and institutional factors that influence teacher research practices, the education sector can empower educators to conduct high-quality, impactful research that enhances teaching and learning outcomes.

### *Proposed Training Program*

The proposed training program of this study was based on the results of the study. As indicated on the results of the study, all the aspects of the study were identified as essential components of the proposed study. As indicated on the results, all the respondents expressed their interest in being part of the training program from the basic crafting of the problem to the last components of the conduct of research. Thus, the proposed project of the study was coined as Project RESEARCH or Research Education for Aspiring Scholars and Investigators. Project RESEARCH is a comprehensive training project designed to provide aspiring scholars and investigators with the knowledge, skills, and practical experience necessary to conduct high-quality research. This project aims to equip participants with the tools and resources needed to plan, execute, and disseminate research effectively.

The implementation of the RESEARCH project is driven by the need to cultivate a new generation of skilled researchers and scholars. In today's rapidly evolving world, the ability to conduct research and generate new knowledge is more important than ever. By providing aspiring scholars and investigators with the necessary training and support, the project aims to foster a culture of research excellence and innovation. Ultimately, the goal of the RESEARCH project is to empower individuals to make meaningful contributions to their fields and society as a whole through rigorous and impactful research.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, several important conclusions were drawn. First, the teachers demonstrated a high level of competence motivation across cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions, signifying that they are both motivated and committed to engaging in action research. This holistic motivation contributes significantly to their capacity to enhance teaching practices, achieve professional growth, and sustain their dedication to the teaching profession. Second, the presence of effective coping mechanisms enabled teachers to manage challenges related to financial constraints, time limitations, and access to expert resources. These strategies facilitated a more effective engagement with the complexities of action research, yielding quality outputs and underscoring the importance of institutional support and available resources in fostering a conducive research environment.

Third, while teachers perceived themselves to have strong research skills, this has not yet translated into a corresponding volume of conducted action research, suggesting a gap between perceived competence and actual research output. Fourth, the study found a strong positive correlation between teachers' competence motivation and their research proficiency across various stages of the action research process. This finding highlights the untapped potential within the district, suggesting that motivated teachers can become key leaders in promoting meaningful and impactful action research. Finally, the significant association between teachers' coping mechanisms and their research proficiency suggests a readiness and resilience among educators. With a positive disposition toward overcoming research-related challenges, these teachers exhibit the capability to conduct action research that could lead to both educational improvement and professional advancement.

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