

INTRODUCING PROBLEM MANAGEMENT PLUS (PM+) FOR TEACHERS' PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING IN THAMIMISLAM FOUNDATION SCHOOL, THAILAND

Hafnidar^{1*}, Ikhyanuddin², Andi Subhan Husain³

¹Department of Psychology, Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Malikussaleh
Jl. Cot Tengku Nie, Reuleut, Muara Batu, Aceh Utara 24355, Aceh -Indonesia

²Department of Accounting, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Malikussaleh

³Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok - Thailand

*Corresponding Author: hafnidar@unimal.ac.id

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ABSTRACT This community-engagement article describes the introduction of Problem Management Plus (PM+), a World Health Organization low-intensity psychological intervention, as a practical framework for strengthening teachers' psychological well-being at Thamimislam Foundation School, Thailand. The activity was designed as an introductory psychoeducational. It translated core PM+ ideas into an accessible school context, with emphasis on understanding stress reactions, managing practical problems, using simple stress-management strategies, strengthening helpful activity, and mobilising social support. The activity records show sustained teacher participation in a classroom-based session, direct interaction between facilitators and participants, and a closing group forum that supported shared reflection.

KEYWORDS: *Problem Management Plus; Teacher Well-Being; Psychological Distress; School Mental Health; Community Engagement; Thailand.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching is an emotional and demanding job, where teachers must manage various responsibilities that can lead to psychological stress. Research shows that when professional demands exceed a teacher's coping capacity, this can result in emotional exhaustion, job dissatisfaction, and even resignation from the profession, with 40-50% of teachers leaving their jobs within the first five years (McCarthy et al., 2014). The high prevalence of psychological disorders among teachers, such as chronic stress and burnout syndrome, is often linked to inadequate working conditions and a lack of social support (Rahmani et al., 2024). Therefore, school-based well-being initiatives need to adopt practical and applicable approaches in professional development, with a focus on strengthening administrative and peer support, as well as self-care practices (Pressley et al., 2025). This is essential for creating a healthier and more sustainable work environment for educators.

Problem Management Plus (PM+) is a low-intensity psychological intervention developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) to address mental health issues in adults experiencing distress, particularly in resource-limited settings. It consists of five structured sessions that integrate problem management with behavioral strategies, making it adaptable for various cultural contexts and scalable for community use (Sumariuk & Yurtsenyuk, 2025) (Sangraula et al., 2018). Recent studies have demonstrated PM+'s effectiveness in reducing symptoms of anxiety, depression, and PTSD among diverse populations, including Syrian refugees and individuals affected by humanitarian crises in Ukraine (Sumariuk & Yurtsenyuk, 2025) (Akhtar et al., 2024). The intervention can be delivered by trained non-specialists under supervision, which enhances accessibility in areas with limited mental health resources (Papathanasiou et al., 2024) (Akhtar et al., 2024). However, successful implementation requires careful training, contextual adaptation, and ongoing monitoring to ensure that individuals needing more intensive care are appropriately referred (Sumariuk & Yurtsenyuk, 2025). Overall, PM+ represents a promising approach to improving mental health outcomes in challenging environments.

The present community-engagement activity introduced PM+ concepts to teachers at Thamimislam Foundation School, Thailand. The purpose was not to diagnose participants or to present a one-off workshop as equivalent to the full WHO intervention. Instead, the session aimed to build mental-health literacy around manageable everyday stressors and to familiarise teachers with a structured sequence of coping ideas derived from PM+: stabilising stress reactions, defining solvable problems, identifying realistic actions, maintaining helpful routines, and recognising the value of social support. This distinction is methodologically important. A brief introductory session can establish acceptability and feasibility, but evidence of symptom change would require validated measures, an appropriate follow-up period, and a design capable of distinguishing intervention effects from expectancy, novelty, and other influences.

This article has three objectives. First, it documents how PM+ concepts were introduced in a school-based international community-engagement setting. Second, it analyses the observable implementation process, including participant engagement, facilitator-participant interaction, and the use of group discussion to translate psychological concepts into the teachers' professional context. Third, it identifies practical considerations for future teacher well-being programs that intend to use PM+ more fully, including cultural adaptation, facilitator competence, safeguarding, referral, supervision, and outcome evaluation.

1.1 Literature Review

a. Problem Management Plus as a Scalable Psychological Intervention

Problem Management Plus (PM+) is a low-intensity psychological intervention developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) to address psychological distress in populations exposed to adversity, such as migrants and individuals affected by conflict. Evidence from systematic reviews indicates that PM+ effectively reduces distress indicators, with a small to medium effect size ($SMD = -0.45$) on symptoms of anxiety and depression, although outcomes vary significantly across different contexts, highlighting the need for careful adaptation and evaluation (Schäfer et al., 2023) (Purgato et al., 2025). Recent trials, including those in Ukraine, demonstrate PM+'s effectiveness in managing stress-related disorders, with significant reductions in PTSD and anxiety symptoms reported (Sumariuk & Yurtsenyuk, 2025). The intervention's structured approach allows for scalability and task-shifting, making it suitable for diverse settings, including refugee communities, where trained lay facilitators deliver the program (Papathanasiou et al., 2024; Lea, 2022). However, the evidence base remains limited, necessitating further research to enhance its implementation and effectiveness across various populations (Schäfer et al., 2023).

b. Teacher Psychological Well-Being and the School Context

Teachers play a critical role in shaping the mental health landscape within schools, yet they also face significant psychological challenges themselves, including high stress and burnout rates, which can adversely affect their performance and student outcomes (Gray et al., 2017). Effective teacher well-being programs are essential, aiming to help educators recognize stress, implement practical coping strategies, and seek help when necessary (Goodwin et al., 2021). However, the implementation of such programs is often hindered by various constraints, including time limitations, insufficient training, and cultural perceptions of mental health (Goodwin et al., 2021; Beames et al., 2023). To mitigate stigma and enhance participation, programs should employ non-stigmatizing language, maintain confidentiality, and clearly differentiate between psychoeducation and clinical care (Goodwin et al., 2021). Evidence suggests that well-designed interventions can significantly reduce stress and improve overall well-being, but they must be tailored to fit the unique school environment to ensure effectiveness and sustainability (Beames et al., 2023).

c. From Workshop Exposure to Responsible PM+ Implementation

The implementation of Problem Management Plus (PM+) as a structured framework for teacher well-being underscores the necessity of comprehensive preparation and contextual adaptation before integrating psychological interventions into services. While PM+ has demonstrated effectiveness in various settings, including refugee communities in the U.S. and among adolescents living with HIV

in South Africa, it is crucial to ensure that facilitators are adequately trained and supervised to maintain intervention integrity (Story et al., 2025) (Wambua et al., 2024). The World Health Organization emphasizes that without the appropriate session structure, facilitator training, and safeguarding measures, a single workshop cannot be deemed a complete intervention (Kohrt et al., 2024). This approach not only preserves the practical value of PM+ but also mitigates the risk of overstating its therapeutic effectiveness, thereby fostering a more realistic understanding of its role in enhancing mental health support within educational contexts (Sijbrandij et al., 2015) (Oudenaren et al., 2025).

2. METHOD

The activity was conducted in the form of a psychoeducational session. The content was structured around the practical principles of PM+, including recognizing the relationship between stress and everyday problems; using simple stress-management techniques; distinguishing problems that can be solved from those that cannot be changed immediately; identifying manageable and realistic actions; maintaining or reactivating helpful activities; and identifying sources of social support. The discussion connected these concepts with teachers' everyday responsibilities and encouraged participants to consider how structured problem management could be applied to cope with routine work-related pressures. The session did not require participants to disclose sensitive personal histories or experiences in the group.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Establishing a Supportive Entry Point for Teacher Well-Being

The activity began in a classroom format that placed the facilitator and teachers in direct conversational proximity. This arrangement supported an introductory approach in which psychological well-being could be discussed as part of everyday professional functioning rather than as a specialised clinical topic. The visual documentation shows participants seated in a shared learning space with presentation material at the front of the room. This setting was appropriate for psychoeducation because it allowed explanation, questions, and examples to be handled collectively while keeping the focus on general coping skills rather than individual case disclosure.



Figure 1. Classroom-based introduction and facilitated discussion on teacher psychological well-being.

3.2 Translating PM+ Concepts into Practical Problem Management

A central implementation task was to translate PM+ from a mental-health manual into language relevant to teachers' daily work. The session emphasised that problem management begins by defining a problem precisely, identifying what can realistically be changed, generating possible responses, selecting a feasible action, and reviewing what happens next. This structure is useful in school settings because occupational stress often includes both emotional reactions and concrete problems such as workload, time pressure, interpersonal misunderstandings, or competing responsibilities. The aim was not to promise that every stressor could be removed, but to reduce the sense of being overwhelmed by breaking a broad difficulty into smaller and more actionable components.



Figure 2. Facilitator-participant interaction during the PM+ introductory activity.

3.3 Participation, Dialogue, and Social Support

The activity photographs document active attendance and interaction across the session. Participants were positioned to listen to the presentation, respond to the facilitator, and engage in discussion. These observable features matter because PM+ relies on practice and application rather than passive exposure to information. The group setting also created a natural opportunity to discuss social support as a coping resource. In a teacher community, supportive collegial relationships may help individuals seek practical advice, share manageable tasks, or identify when a colleague needs additional help. At the same time, social support should remain voluntary and respectful of privacy; a well-being program should never pressure teachers to disclose personal difficulties in front of colleagues.



Figure 3. Teacher participation during the school-based PM+ psychoeducational session.

3.4 Collective Reflection and Institutional Feasibility

The larger group of the activity indicates that the session was embedded in a broader community-engagement context. This format has advantages for initial awareness: it can normalise discussion of psychological well-being, introduce a common vocabulary, and help school stakeholders consider whether more structured support is desirable. Its limitation is equally clear. A public group activity cannot provide the privacy, repeated practice, individual assessment, and supervision associated with full PM+ delivery.



Figure 4. Group documentation following the community-engagement activity at Mesjid Passert Islam, Nonthaburi-Thailand.

3.5 Implementation Lessons for Future Teacher Well-Being Programs

Several lessons follow from the activity. Future programs should separate three levels of support: general well-being education for all staff, structured low-intensity intervention for eligible participants, and specialist referral for people whose needs exceed the intervention's scope. This stepped logic reduces the risk of treating a brief workshop as therapy while still allowing a school to build accessible entry points to support. It also protects participants by making clear where confidentiality, screening, supervision, and referral become necessary.

Cultural adaptation should focus on examples, language, help-seeking norms, and the school's social context without changing the core logic of the intervention so extensively that PM+ is no longer recognisable. In a Thai school context, adaptation may require careful attention to language choice, local expectations about emotional expression, professional hierarchy, and religious or community values. These issues should be explored with local stakeholders rather than assumed by visiting facilitators.

Evaluation should also be strengthened. A future implementation could document attendance and fidelity, use validated measures before and after the program, record participant satisfaction, and include follow-up assessment. If the full PM+ intervention is delivered, evaluation should distinguish feasibility and acceptability from clinical effectiveness. A comparison design would be needed for stronger causal claims. Qualitative interviews could add information about which strategies teachers actually use, which parts require adaptation, and what barriers affect continued practice.

4. CONCLUSION

The introduction of PM+ at Thamimislam Foundation School provided a structured way to discuss teachers' psychological well-being through practical, non-stigmatising coping concepts. The activity translated core PM+ ideas into a school-based psychoeducational format centred on stress

management, manageable problem solving, helpful activity, and social support. Photographic documentation supports the conclusion that the program was implemented as an interactive group activity with opportunities for presentation, discussion, and collective reflection.

The evidence available does not support a claim that the activity improved clinical symptoms or produced measurable changes in psychological well-being. Its contribution is more specific: it documents the feasibility of introducing PM+ concepts within an international school community-engagement setting and identifies the requirements for a stronger next phase. Future implementation should use trained and supervised facilitators, culturally adapted materials, confidential assessment, referral procedures, fidelity monitoring, validated outcome measures, and follow-up. With those safeguards, PM+ can be evaluated more rigorously as part of a broader teacher mental-health support system.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that any conflict-of-interest statement should be completed and verified by all authors before submission. No financial or professional conflict has been documented in the materials supplied for preparation of this manuscript.

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