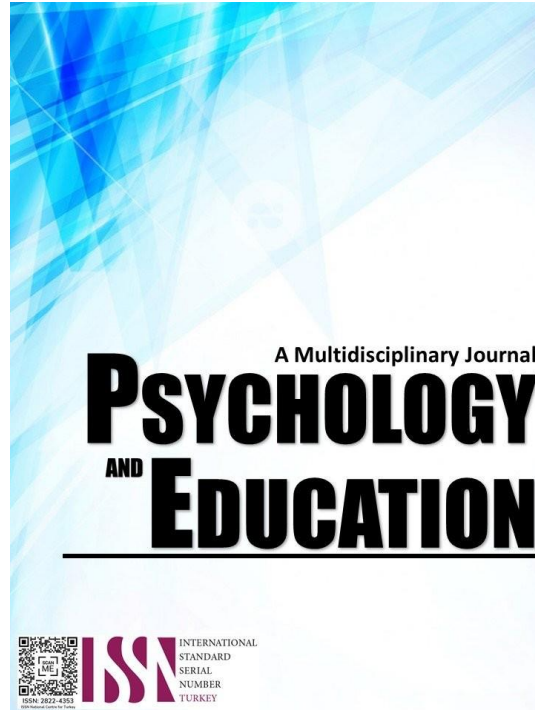


THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN TEACHING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION



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The Lived Experiences of Special Education Teachers in Teaching Inclusive Education

Analiza A. Miña*

For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

Abstract

This study utilized a qualitative research design to investigate the teaching strategies employed by special education teachers within inclusive classrooms. Adopting a phenomenological approach, the research aimed to explore these educators' lived experiences and perspectives, focusing on how their strategies fostered inclusive environments. This study explored the experiences of special education (SPED) teachers in inclusive classrooms, revealing their efforts to address diverse learning needs through personalized education plans and differentiated instructional strategies. Despite facing challenges like insufficient resources, stakeholder resistance, and lack of support, SPED teachers employed coping mechanisms such as individualized education plans (IEPs), multisensory teaching methods, and assistive technology to enhance student accessibility and outcomes. Collaboration with professionals and parents, along with continuous professional development, proved crucial for comprehensive support. Their lived experiences demonstrated a strong commitment to fostering inclusive, empathetic, and respectful classroom communities, underscoring the importance of adequate resources, stakeholder support, and ongoing training to overcome barriers and improve educational experiences for students with disabilities.

Keywords: *Special Education, teaching strategies, inclusive education*

Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the various teaching strategies employed by special education teachers in inclusive education classrooms. It aimed to capture the lived experiences, successes, and challenges these educators face. By understanding how special education teachers navigate and cope with the challenges of inclusive classrooms, the study sought to provide valuable insights that could inform future educational practices and policies.

Special Education teachers face various challenges globally. These challenges include the need for specialized teaching methods, aligning social and emotional development with academic achievement, and preparing students for real-world difficulties (Şanal, 2023). Additionally, they encounter obstacles such as inadequate training on new educational approaches, unstable internet connections for online instructions, and parents' lack of instructional knowledge in remote teaching (Nugraha et al., 2023).

In Pakistan, special education teachers encountered problems with in-service training, administrative issues, lack of interdisciplinary teams, insufficient technological aids, negative attitudes towards inclusive education, inadequate budget allocation, and difficulties in assessment preparation and implementation (Shoaib et al., 2023). Special education teachers encountered challenges in Cambodia due to insufficient infrastructure, limited policies, and negative societal attitudes toward disabilities (Chantou, 2023). In Vietnam, teachers struggle with implementing Active Teaching and Learning (ATL) due to pressure from the educational system from the parents and lack of training, leading to confusion in adopting student-centered approaches (Minh & Ha, 2022).

In the Philippines, Special Education teachers face challenges in teaching learners with hearing impairment, particularly in using sign language and effective communication methods, requiring training and assistive technology integration (Bajenio et al., 2023). In addition, a study also found that special education teachers in the Philippines face challenges like lack of preparedness, insufficient expertise, and the impact of social contexts on teaching, as highlighted in the research on inclusive education experiences (Macabenta et al., 2023).

Locally, a study conducted by Abina et al. (2022) found that special education teachers in Davao City encountered challenges related to mixed disabilities in one classroom, lack of comprehension, poor parental educational attainment, tantrum-inducing behavior, inadequate funding, and government support.

Despite the growing body of literature on the challenges special education teachers face in various countries, there remains a significant research gap in understanding the specific plight of special education teachers in Davao City, Philippines. While studies from Pakistan, Cambodia, Vietnam, and the Philippines highlighted issues such as inadequate training, administrative hurdles, negative societal attitudes, and difficulties in implementing student-centered approaches, there is a lack of research focusing on the unique challenges of special education teachers in Davao City. Additionally, the study by Abina et al. (2022) provides localized insights into such difficulties as mixed disabilities in classrooms, parental educational attainment, behavioral issues, and insufficient government support, but further research is needed to delve deeper into the factors of these challenges within Davao City; thus, there is a need to conduct this study.

Research Questions

In this qualitative research, the primary aim was to explore the various teaching strategies employed by special education teachers in

inclusive education classrooms. To achieve this, the study posed several key questions:

1. What are the teaching experiences of the special education teachers in inclusive classroom?
2. How do special education teachers cope with the challenges in teaching inclusive classroom?
3. What are the lived experiences of special education teachers in teaching inclusive classroom?

Methodology

Research Design

The research design employed in this study is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research focuses on understanding phenomena in their natural settings and exploring the meaning individuals ascribe to them. This study used qualitative methods to delve deeply into special education teachers' experiences, perspectives, and practices in inclusive education classrooms. Qualitative research design allows for flexibility and adaptability, enabling researchers to explore complex issues in detail and capture the richness and depth of human experiences (Brinkmann, 2023)

Thematic analysis was used in this study. This approach provided rich insights into the diverse instructional approaches employed by special education teachers. Through Thematic Analysis, the research sought to identify recurring themes such as culturally responsive teaching, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), differentiated instruction, and collaborative learning, which are crucial in promoting inclusive practices.

Thematic analysis is a widely utilized qualitative research approach across various disciplines like psychology, sociology, and healthcare. It involves systematically identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within data. The process typically involves coding, categorizing, and theming data to extract meaningful insights. (Cernasev & Axon, 2023). Thematic analysis can help understand people's beliefs, experiences, and perspectives, providing deep contextual insights that other research methods may not effectively capture. It is a flexible method that allows researchers to explore and interpret complex data sets, making it valuable for applied health services research. Thematic analysis is crucial for identifying key concerns, analyzing changes, and improving care practices in various institutional settings (Elliott et al., 2023).

Reflective discussions were essential to ensure the study's strength and reliability. The interview session among respondents helped the researcher think deeply about the work and question any biases that might have been present during data collection and analysis. By engaging in dialogue, the researcher aimed to consider different perspectives on the ideas that emerged during the one-on-one interviews. This approach allowed for a better understanding of the details in the data and increased confidence in the findings.

Participants

Moreover, the study was conducted among 8 elementary-grade teachers in public schools within the Davao City Division in the Davao region. The division's schools cater to learners with special needs and exceptional needs (SNED).

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants for this study. Purposive sampling ensured representation across grade levels, disability types, and geographical areas. Andrade (2020) defines purposive sampling as a research method for selecting participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the study's objectives. Purposive sampling allows researchers to target specific groups or individuals with key traits or experiences essential to the research investigation.

Instruments

The primary data collection instrument is the researcher herself. As the researcher, she observed, took notes, talked to people, and conducted interviews.

The researcher used a semi-structured interview guide that the panel members have validated in the conduct of the in-depth interview. This list of questions asked to the CPs during the interview consisted of four main questions. The first main question has five sub-questions; the second main question has three sub-questions, and the third main question has six sub-questions, while the fourth main question has two sub-questions. The last part is a wrap-up question where CPs could add anything or wish to share more about their lived experiences.

Procedure

Individual in-depth interviews (IDI) were the primary method used in this study. Individual In-depth Interviews (IDIs) are a valuable qualitative research method used in various fields. They have been employed in studies focusing on diverse topics, such as identifying causes of relapse in methamphetamine users (Kaviyani et al., 2023).

In the context of this study, individual in-depth interviews served as a means to delve deeply into the experiences, perspectives, and challenges these educators face. Through one-on-one interviews, the researcher had the opportunity to explore the nuanced strategies, adaptations, and interventions employed by special education teachers to support students with diverse learning needs in inclusive settings. This methodological choice allowed for a comprehensive examination of the realities encountered by special education teachers, shedding light on their roles within inclusive classrooms and providing valuable insights for enhancing support systems and

professional development initiatives.

Ethical Considerations

In this study, the researcher also adhered to the ethical considerations of the study. Ethical considerations in research are crucial for safeguarding the rights of human subjects. Researchers are increasingly focusing on ethical guidelines and codes to ensure the validity and authenticity of their work, especially with the rise of online research and plagiarism detection tools (Kushwaha & Dube, 2023). These guidelines protect individuals from unethical interventions and ensure appropriate experimental conditions (Kessio & Chang'ach, 2020). In this study, the researcher adhered to the following ethical considerations:

Informed Consent Form. Before Participation, participants were provided with detailed information about the study objectives, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. They had to sign an informed consent form indicating their voluntary agreement to participate in the research.

Voluntary Participation. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without facing consequences.

Transparency. The researcher maintains transparency throughout the research process by providing clear and accurate information about the study's purpose, methods, and potential implications to participants, stakeholders, and relevant institutional bodies.

Dependability. To ensure the dependability of the study findings, consistent and systematic data collection and analysis methods were employed. Detailed documentation of research procedures, decisions, and modifications was kept to facilitate transparency and accountability.

Credibility. The researcher employed rigorous methodological approaches to enhance the credibility of the study findings. This included triangulation of data sources, member checking, and peer debriefing sessions to verify interpretations and ensure the accuracy of the results.

Transferability. Efforts were made to enhance the transferability of the study findings by providing comprehensive descriptions of the research methodology, participant selection criteria, and data collection procedures.

Results and Discussion

The study's findings underscore the critical role of special education teachers in fostering inclusive classrooms. These teachers' experiences highlight the necessity for systemic support, adequate resources, and professional development to address the multifaceted needs of students with disabilities. Special education teachers can create equitable learning environments by implementing personalized education plans, adapting instructional strategies, and employing assistive technology.

The insights from this research can be applied in several ways to enhance inclusive education practices. Educational institutions can use these findings to develop targeted professional development programs that equip special education teachers with the necessary skills and strategies. Policymakers can leverage this information to advocate for better funding and resources for inclusive education. Schools can foster stronger collaborations among teachers, parents, and stakeholders to build supportive and inclusive learning communities.

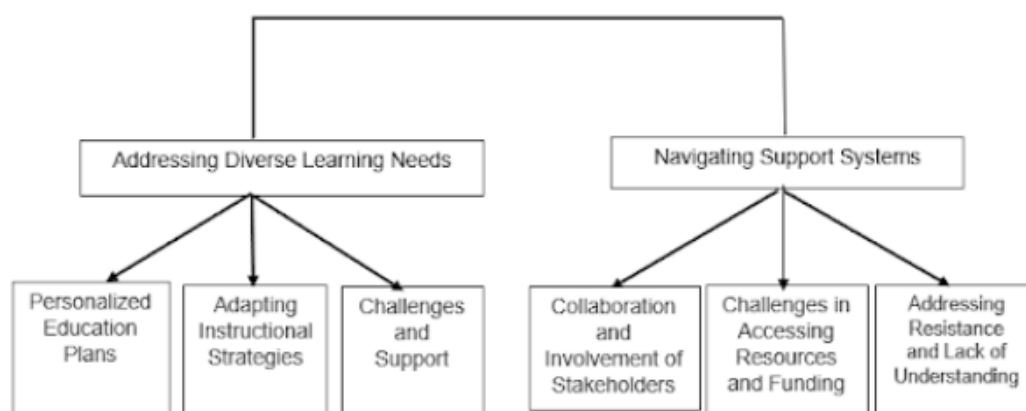


Figure 1. *Experiences of Teachers teaching in inclusive classrooms*

Presented in Figure 1 were the experiences of special education teachers teaching in inclusive classrooms, which were able to generate two major themes: Addressing Diverse Learning Needs and Navigating Support System with six subthemes: Personalized Education Plans, Adapting Instructional Strategies, Challenges and Support, Collaboration and Involvement of Stakeholders, Challenges in Accessing Resources and Funding, and Addressing Resistance and Lack of Understanding.

Addressing Diverse Learning Needs

Addressing diverse learning needs in a special education context is essential for ensuring students receive the personalized support they require to thrive academically and socially. This multifaceted challenge encompasses tailoring instruction, providing accommodations, and fostering an inclusive environment that embraces individual differences.

Special education teachers play a pivotal role in identifying and addressing students' diverse needs, as shared by Participant 1.

As a special education teacher, one of the most prominent challenges is addressing the diverse learning needs of students with various disabilities is each student requires personalized accommodations. Kailangan gyud nimo sila e cater isa isa, dili gyud ta pwede makalimot pagtagad sa ilaha.

("As a special education teacher, one of the most prominent challenges is addressing the diverse learning needs of students with various disabilities because each student requires personalized accommodations. You really need to cater to them individually, we cannot forget to pay attention to them.") (P1, IDI 1)

Participant 2 also agreed,

Sa akong experienced lang ma'am, kanang kulangan gyud kayo og learning resources para sa mga bata. Isa pa gyud ana kay insufficient ang funding, and inadequate specialized materials and equipment.

("In my experience ma'am, the shortage of learning resources for the children is really serious. Another thing is the insufficient funding, and inadequate specialized materials and equipment.") (P2, IDI 2)

Furthermore, participant 7 added,

Sa akoo na part, maglisod gyud kog assess sa mga bata kay dili baya same sila sa mga naa sa normal nak lase. For me ma'am, finding appropriate assessment tools and strategies that accurately measure each student's growth and proficiency while accommodating their disabilities requires creativity and flexibility.

("In my part, I really struggle to assess the children because they're not the same as those in regular classes. For me ma'am, finding appropriate assessment tools and strategies that accurately measure each student's growth and proficiency while accommodating their disabilities requires creativity and flexibility.") (P7, IDI 7)

The challenges highlighted by special education teachers underscore the necessity for individualized accommodations, and schools must prioritize funding and resource allocation to support specialized materials and equipment, ensuring all students have access to quality education. These findings aligned with the result of a study made by Azmi and Tahar (2023), who found that special education teachers encounter many obstacles in delivering effective education to students with special needs, highlighting the need for personalized accommodations, adequate resources, and creative assessment approaches.

Personalized Education Plans (PEPs) are tailored frameworks designed to address the unique learning needs of each student, particularly those with disabilities or special needs. These plans outline specific strategies, accommodations, and goals to support academic, social, and emotional growth.

By involving parents, teachers, and specialists, PEPs ensure that every student receives individualized support and access to educational opportunities as shared by Participant 2.

As a SPED teacher for almost 4 years, na experienced nako na need gyud naa ta'y personalized education plans tailored to each student's unique needs. Kay deraa sa atong plans naka include na ang involvement sa parents, fellow teachers, and specialists to ensure that every student receives the support and accommodations they need.

("As a SPED teacher for almost 4 years, I've experienced the necessity of having personalized education plans tailored to each student's unique needs. Because within our plans, the involvement of parents, fellow teachers, and specialists is included to ensure that every student receives the support and accommodations they need.") (P2, IDI 2)

In the same vein, participant 7 supported the above idea,

Aside sa individualized learning ma'am, gina hatag pud nako ang structured support to help students. Example ani kay gina break nako ang tasks into manageable steps, offering prompts or cues, and gradually reducing assistance as students become more proficient.

("Aside from individualized learning, ma'am, I also provide structured support to help students. For example, I break tasks into manageable steps, offer prompts or cues, and gradually reduce assistance as students become more proficient.") (P7, IDI 7)

The above theme implies a necessity for Personalized Education Plans (PEPs), highlighting the critical role of collaboration among parents, teachers, and specialists in supporting students with special needs. These findings are supported by Vargas (2022), who found that Implementing Personalized Education Plans (PEPs) is crucial for ensuring that each student receives customized strategies and accommodations, thereby fostering their academic, social, and emotional development.

Adapting Instructional Strategies

Adapting instructional strategies is a crucial aspect of teaching, especially in special education, where students possess diverse learning needs. It involves tailoring teaching methods to accommodate varying abilities, learning styles, and interests.

By implementing flexible and personalized approaches, SPED teachers can effectively engage students and facilitate meaningful learning experiences, as Participant 1 experienced.

Gina emphasized gyud nako ang differentiated Instruction ma'am, kay gina connect nako ang teaching methods to accommodate the varying abilities, learning styles, and interests of my student.

("I emphasize differentiated instruction because I connect teaching methods to accommodate the varying abilities, learning styles, and interests of my students.") (P1, IDI 1)

In addition, participant 2 also added,

Maybe effective pud ang differentiated instruction ma'am, and also needed pud namo e incorporate and activities that engage multiple senses, such as hands-on manipulatives, visual aids, auditory cues, and movement-based learning."

("Differentiated instruction may also be effective, and we also need to incorporate activities that engage multiple senses, such as hands-on manipulatives, visual aids, auditory cues, and movement-based learning.") (P2, IDI 2)

Similarly, participant 6 shared,

Aside sa individualized learning ma'am, gina hatag pud nako ang structured support to help students. Example ani kay gina break nako ang tasks into manageable steps, offering prompts or cues, and gradually reducing assistance as students become more proficient.

("Aside from individualized learning, I also provide structured support to help students. For example, I break tasks into manageable steps, offer prompts or cues, and gradually reduce assistance as students become more proficient.") (P6, IDI 6)

The above theme emphasizes differentiated instruction and multisensory activities and highlights the need for SPED teachers to employ diverse and flexible teaching strategies to meet each student's unique needs. The findings are supported by Fleming (2023), who found that structured support plays a vital role in fostering student independence and proficiency. Research emphasizes the significance of structure in enhancing engagement and learning outcomes.

Challenges and Support

There were different challenges SPED teachers faced, from addressing diverse learning needs to managing behaviors and fostering supportive environments, but they encountered multifaceted obstacles in their daily practice.

However, with adequate support from stakeholders, ongoing professional development, and a commitment to personalized approaches, these challenges can be effectively met, as Participant 1 shared.

Kailangan gyud nimo sila e cater isa isa, dili gyud ta pwede makalimot pagtagad sa ilaha.

("You really need to cater to them one by one; we cannot forget to pay attention to them.") (P1, IDI 1)

Lisod gyud para sa akua specially kay bagohan pako, need gyud og more training and professional development opportunities related to inclusive education and special needs support.

In addition, participant 6 also shared the same sentiments,

("It's really difficult for me, especially since I'm new; I really need more training and professional development opportunities related to inclusive education and special needs support.") (P6, IDI 6)

Kailangan man gud namo og support sa stakeholders and parents kay para maging successful gyud ang progress sa bata.

("We really need support from stakeholders and parents for the child's progress to be successful.") (P8, IDI 8)

The above theme implied that the experiences of SPED teachers underscore the importance of ongoing professional development and stakeholder support to address the diverse challenges in special education effectively. This was supported by Strimel et al. (2023), who found that special education teachers faced challenges in addressing diverse learning needs, managing behaviors, and securing resources, and they just need a personalized education plan, differentiated instructional strategies, and structured support to cater to each student's unique requirements.

Navigating Support System

Navigating the support system is essential for special education teachers as they strive to address the diverse needs of their students. This system encompasses collaboration with parents, fellow educators, specialists, and stakeholders to ensure that each student receives the necessary academic and personal growth support.

Participant 2 shared the importance of effectively understanding and leveraging this support network to help SPED teachers foster inclusive environments and promote the success of students with special needs.

Sa akong experienced lang ma'am, kanang kulangan gyud kayo og learning resources para sa mga bata. Isa pa gyud ana kay insufficient ang funding, and inadequate specialized materials and equipment.

("In my experience, ma'am, one of the major challenges is the lack of learning resources for the children. Another issue is the insufficient funding and inadequate specialized materials and equipment.") (P2, IDI 2)

In the same vein, participant 5 also shared,

Usahay mag problema pud ko ma'am kay naa guardians or parents na dili maka dawat sa kahimtang sa ilang anak. Ang uban pud ka'y lack of support pud sa ilang study.

("Sometimes, ma'am, I also encounter guardians or parents who can't accept the condition of their child. Some also lack support for their child's studies.") (P5, IDI 5)

In addition, participant 8 also emphasized,

Usahay ma'am, maka encounter gyud ko og mga tao na unsupportive, and they showed resistance or lack of understanding from administrators, colleagues, or parents. Kailangan man gud namo og support sa stakeholders and parents kay para maging successful gyud ang progress sa bata.

("Sometimes, ma'am, I really encounter people who are unsupportive and show resistance or lack of understanding, whether from administrators, colleagues, or parents. We really need support from stakeholders and parents for the child's progress to be successful.") (P8, IDI 8)

Collaboration and Involvement of Stakeholders

Collaboration and involvement of stakeholders are vital components in ensuring educational initiatives' success, especially in special education. By fostering partnerships with administrators, colleagues, parents, and other professionals, a more comprehensive support network can be established to address the diverse needs of students with disabilities.

Through effective collaboration, stakeholders can contribute their expertise, resources, and perspectives, ultimately leading to improved student outcomes, as shared by Participant 2.

As a SPED teacher for almost four years, na experienced nako na need gyud naa ta'y personalized education plans tailored to each student's unique needs. Kay deraa sa atong plans naka include na ang involvement sa parents, fellow teachers, and specialists, to ensure that every student receives the support and accommodations they need.

("As a SPED teacher for almost four years, I have experienced the need for personalized education plans tailored to each student's unique needs. Because in our plans, the involvement of parents, fellow teachers, and specialists is included to ensure that every student receives the support and accommodations they need.") (P2, IDI 2)

In the same vein, participant 7 also shared,

Aside sa individualized learning ma'am, gina hatag pud nako ang structured support to help students. Example ani kay gina break nako ang tasks into manageable steps, offering prompts or cues, and gradually reducing assistance as students become more proficient.

("Aside from individualized learning, ma'am, I also provide structured support to help students. An example of this is breaking tasks into manageable steps, offering prompts or cues, and gradually reducing assistance as students become more proficient.") (P7, IDI 7)

In addition, participant 8 also supported,

Gigamit gyud nako ang proactive strategies to promote positive behavior and create a supportive classroom environment ma'am. Kanang ginatudloan nako ang mga bata to reinforce expected behaviors, providing clear expectations, and implementing consistent consequences when necessary.

("I really use proactive strategies to promote positive behavior and create a supportive classroom environment, ma'am. I teach the children to reinforce expected behaviors, provide clear expectations, and implement consistent consequences when necessary.") (P8, IDI 8)

The insights from participants underscore the significance of collaboration, personalized education plans, and proactive strategies in enhancing student outcomes in special education. Developing personalized education plans, maintaining regular communication, and actively engaging students in tailored support and resources and educational practices have shown significant improvements in student achievements (Gega & Petro, 2023).

Challenges in Accessing Resources and Funding

Navigating the challenges of accessing resources and securing funding is a significant obstacle faced by SPED teachers in special education. Insufficient funding and limited access to specialized materials and equipment often hinder the delivery of high-quality services to students with disabilities.

Addressing these challenges requires access to essential resources for all students, as Participant 2 shared.

Sa akong experienced lang ma'am, kanang kulangan gyud kayo og learning resources para sa mga bata. Isa pa gyud ana kay insufficient ang funding, and inadequate specialized materials and equipment.

("In my experience, ma'am, there's a severe lack of learning resources for the children. Another issue is the insufficient funding, and inadequate specialized materials and equipment.") (P2, IDI 2)

Furthermore, participant 3 also shared the importance of balance in teaching.

For me, problema gyud kayo unsaon pag balance bitaw ma'am. As a SPED teacher, daghan pud kayo mig need ipang prepare. Kailangan pa gyud ma submit ang mga reports on time. Daghan kayo og paper works na not connected na sa teaching.

("For me, the problem really lies in how to balance everything, ma'am. As a SPED teacher, we also have a lot to prepare for. We still need to submit reports on time. There's a lot of paperwork that's not connected to teaching.") (P3, IDI 3)

In the same vein, participant 6 also shared,

Lisod gyud para sa akooa specially kay bagohan pako, need gyud og more training and professional development opportunities related to inclusive education and special needs support.

("It's really difficult for me, especially since I'm new, I really need more training and professional development opportunities related to inclusive education and special needs support.") (P6, IDI 6)

The challenges of inadequate funding and limited access to specialized resources significantly impact the ability of SPED teachers to provide high-quality education to students with disabilities. These obstacles hinder the provision of high-quality education to students with disabilities, leading to significant impacts on their learning outcomes and overall well-being (Ahmed & Chakraborty, 2023). One theory that supports these findings is the Social Model of Disability of 2013. This model emphasizes that disability is not solely a result of an individual's impairments but is also influenced by social, environmental, and attitudinal barriers.

Addressing Resistance and Lack of Understanding

Addressing resistance and lack of understanding among stakeholders is critical to fostering inclusive education environments. SPED teachers often encounter barriers from administrators, colleagues, and parents who may not fully grasp the importance of inclusive practices or the unique needs of students with disabilities.

Overcoming these challenges necessitates effective communication and additional training, as experienced by Participant 6.

Lisod gyud para sa akooa specially kay bagohan pako, need gyud og more training and professional development opportunities related to inclusive education and special needs support.

("It's really difficult for me, especially since I'm new. I really need more training and professional development opportunities related to inclusive education and special needs support.") (P6, IDI 6)

In the same vein, participant 7 also shared,

Sa akooa na part, maglisod gyud kog assess sa mga bata kay dili baya same sila sa mga naa sa normal nga klase.

("For me, it's really difficult to assess the children because they're not the same as those in normal classes.") (P7, IDI 7)

In addition, participant 7 supported,

Usahay ma'am, maka encounter gyud ko og mga tao na unsupportive, and they showed resistance or lack of understanding from administrators, colleagues, or parents.

("Sometimes, ma'am, I really encounter people who are unsupportive and show resistance or lack of understanding from administrators, colleagues, or parents.") (P7, IDI 7)

The emerging theme above implied that the resistance and lack of understanding among stakeholders significantly hinder the implementation of inclusive education practices. Addressing these issues requires enhanced communication, targeted training, and professional development to build awareness and support for inclusive education among administrators, colleagues, and parents (Strimel et al., 2023b).

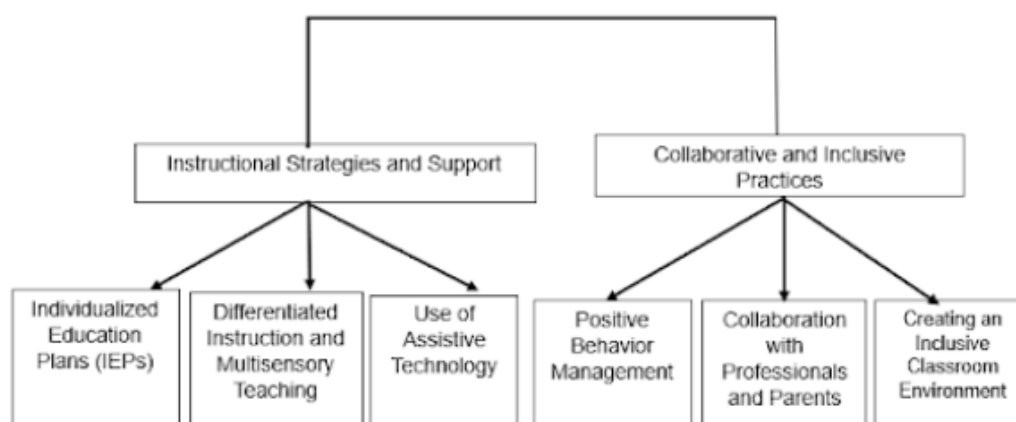


Figure 2. Coping Mechanism of Teacher teaching in inclusive classrooms

Presented in Figure 2 were the coping mechanisms for the challenges encountered by teachers teaching in inclusive classrooms, and were able to generate two major themes: Instructional Strategies and Support and Collaborative and Inclusive Practices with six subthemes: Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), Differentiated Instruction and Multisensory Teaching, Use of Assistive Technology, **Positive Behavior Management, Collaboration with Professionals and Parents, and Creating an Inclusive Classroom Environment.**

Instructional Strategies and Support

Instructional strategies and support in a Special Education (SPED) classroom are crucial for fostering an inclusive and effective learning environment tailored to the diverse needs of students with disabilities.

By implementing these specialized approaches, SPED teachers can enhance student engagement through positive behavior management, as shared by Participant 2.

Kanang, I employed positive behavior management strategies, such as reinforcement techniques ma'am and visual schedules, to support students with behavioral challenges. Consistency and clear expectations are the key gud ma'am.

("I employed positive behavior management strategies, such as reinforcement techniques and visual schedules, to support students with behavioral challenges. Consistency and clear expectations are the key.") (P2, IDI 2)

In the same vein, participant 5 also shared,

Katong gi tell nako ganina, dapat need mag integrate og assistive technology tools and devices to support students with disabilities in accessing the curriculum and enhancing their learning experience.

("As I mentioned earlier, it is necessary to integrate assistive technology tools and devices to support students with disabilities in accessing the curriculum and enhancing their learning experience.") (P5, IDI 5)

In addition, participant 7 also added,

For me lang ma'am, I actively sought out professional development opportunities to enhance my skills and knowledge in special education and inclusive practices. Staying up-to-date with research-based strategies and best practices helped me effectively navigate challenges in the inclusive classroom.

("For me, I actively sought out professional development opportunities to enhance my skills and knowledge in special education and inclusive practices. Staying up-to-date with research-based strategies and best practices helped me effectively navigate challenges in the inclusive classroom.") (P7, IDI 7)

The emerging theme implied that the use of positive behavior management strategies, assistive technology, and continuous professional development are essential components for creating an inclusive and effective SPED classroom. These approaches support student engagement and learning and equip SPED teachers with the necessary skills and tools to address diverse challenges, ensuring that all students can access and benefit from the curriculum (Halder, 2023).

Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)

Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are customized educational strategies designed to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities. These plans are developed collaboratively by educators, parents, and specialists to ensure that each student receives the support necessary to achieve their academic goals.

IEPs outline specific accommodations tailored to students' needs, as shared by Participant 1.

I addressed the diverse learning needs of students by implementing individualized education plans (IEPs) tailored to each student's strengths and weaknesses.

("I addressed the diverse learning needs of students by implementing individualized education plans (IEPs) tailored to each student's strengths and weaknesses.") (P1, IDI 1)

In the same vein, participant 3 also shared,

I differentiated instruction to meet the varying academic levels within the inclusive classroom. Examples ani ma'am kay mag provide og alternative assignments, flexible grouping, and using various instructional methods to accommodate different learning styles.

("I differentiated instruction to meet the varying academic levels within the inclusive classroom. For example, ma'am, I provided alternative assignments, flexible grouping, and used various instructional methods to accommodate different learning styles.") (P3, IDI 3)

The implementation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and differentiated instruction is critical for addressing the unique needs of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Collaborative efforts among general educators, special educators, and support staff are essential in creating inclusive teaching practices that promote collaboration and build relationships, ultimately enhancing the educational experience for differently abled students (Castle, 2023).

Differentiated Instruction and Multisensory Teaching

Differentiated Instruction is an educational approach that tailors teaching methods and learning activities to meet the diverse needs of individual students.

By varying content, process, and products, teachers can engage students with different learning styles, abilities, and interests, as shared by Participant 2.

Yes, effective gyud ang pag implement of multisensory teaching methods because this allows students to engage with material using different senses.

("Yes, the implementation of multisensory teaching methods is indeed effective because it allows students to engage with material using different senses.") (P2, IDI 2)

In the same vein, participant 3 also shared,

Yes, especially when collaborating with other professionals, such as speech therapists, occupational therapists, and psychologists who ensures a holistic approach to addressing students' difficulties and provides a range of expertise to support their development.

("Yes, especially when collaborating with other professionals, such as speech therapists, occupational therapists, and psychologists who ensure a holistic approach to addressing students' difficulties and provide a range of expertise to support their development.") (P3, IDI 3)

The emerging theme implies that differentiated instruction, particularly through multisensory teaching methods and professional collaboration, is essential for effectively meeting the diverse needs of students in special education. Implementing students' sensory learning styles in creating differentiated content, along with internal and external factors, plays a crucial role in optimizing student learning experiences (Sulistianingrum et al., 2023).

Use of Assistive Technology

The use of assistive technology is a crucial component in special education, enabling personalized learning and enhancing accessibility for students with diverse needs in inclusive classrooms.

Multisensory teaching methods help learners become more engaged in class as shared by participant 2.

Yes, effective gyud ang pag implement of multisensory teaching methods because this allows students to engage with material using different senses.

("Yes, implementing multisensory teaching methods is indeed effective because it allows students to engage with the material using different senses.") (P2, IDI 2)

In the same vein, participant 4 also shared,

Yes. Kanang labi na karun ma'am, effective gyud ang pag provide og assistive technology tools, such as speech-to-text software or specialized keyboards.

("Yes, especially nowadays ma'am, it's very effective to provide assistive technology tools, such as speech-to-text software or specialized keyboards.") (P4, IDI 4)

In addition, participant 5 shared the same experience.

Katong gi tell nako ganina, dapat need mag integrate og assistive technology tools and devices to support students with disabilities in accessing the curriculum and enhancing their learning experience.

("As I mentioned earlier, it's necessary to integrate assistive technology tools and devices to support students with disabilities in accessing the curriculum and enhancing their learning experience.") (P5, IDI 5)

These findings imply that integrating assistive technology and multisensory teaching methods in inclusive classrooms is essential for effectively addressing the diverse needs of students with disabilities, thereby enhancing their engagement and learning outcomes. The emerging theme above is supported by the findings of Pocaan (2022), who explained that effective pedagogical approaches and assistance within Special Education (SPED) settings are paramount in tackling various educational obstacles.

Collaborative and Inclusive Practices

Collaborative and Inclusive Practices in education emphasize the importance of teamwork among educators, families, and community members to create supportive learning environments for all students.

These practices foster a culture of inclusion where every student feels valued, respected, and empowered to succeed academically and socially, as experienced by Participant 3.

Yes, especially when collaborating with other professionals, such as speech therapists, occupational therapists, and psychologists who ensures a holistic approach to addressing students' difficulties and provides a range of expertise to support their development.

("Collaborating with other professionals, like speech therapists, occupational therapists, and psychologists, is essential. They ensure a comprehensive approach to addressing students' challenges and offer a diverse range of expertise to support their growth.") (P3, IDI 3)

In the same vein, participant 4 also shared,

Yes. Kanang labi na karun ma'am, effective gyud ang pag provide og assistive technology tools, such as speech-to-text software or specialized keyboards.

("Yes. Especially now, providing assistive technology tools like speech-to-text software or specialized keyboards is highly effective.") (P4, IDI 4)

In addition, participant 5 supported the above ideas,

Yes. Ofcourse, labi na ang pag create og supportive and inclusive classroom environment to fosters a sense of belonging and acceptance among students with special needs."

("Yes. Of course, creating a supportive and inclusive classroom environment fosters a sense of belonging and acceptance among students with special needs.") (P5, IDI 5)

These findings imply that fostering collaborative and inclusive practices among educators, families, and community members is crucial for creating supportive learning environments that enhance all students' academic and social success, especially those with special needs. This is supported by Singh and Pallai (2023b), who found that a collaborative approach involving educators, families, and communities is crucial for promoting inclusive education and maximizing the success of all students.

Positive Behavior Management

Positive Behavior Management is an approach used in education to promote desirable behaviors and reduce problem behaviors by focusing on reinforcement and encouragement.

By creating a supportive and nurturing environment where students feel valued and acknowledged for their efforts and cooperation within the classroom, as shared by Participant 2.

Kanang, I employed positive behavior management strategies, such as reinforcement techniques ma'am and visual schedules, to support students with behavioral challenges. Consistency and clear expectations are the key gud ma'am.

("I used positive behavior management techniques like rewards and visual schedules to help students with behavior issues. Consistency and clear expectations are crucial.") (P2, IDI 2)

Similarly, participant 3 also shared,

Yes, especially when collaborating with other professionals, such as speech therapists, occupational therapists, and psychologists who ensures a holistic approach to addressing students' difficulties and provides a range of expertise to support their development.

("Yes, particularly when working with other professionals like speech therapists, occupational therapists, and psychologists who ensure

a comprehensive approach to tackling students' challenges and offer a variety of expertise to aid their progress.") (P3, IDI 3)

In addition, participant 7 also supported the ideas,

Utilizing positive behavior support strategies helps to manage challenging behaviors effectively and promote a positive classroom atmosphere conducive to learning for all students.

("Using positive behavior support methods assists in handling difficult behaviors well and creating a positive classroom environment suitable for learning for all students.") (P7, IDI 7)

The emerging theme implied that the use of positive behavior management strategies in creating a structured and supportive classroom environment is critical for addressing behavioral challenges and fostering a positive learning atmosphere. Utilizing person-centered planning, positive reinforcement, and team collaboration, such approaches have shown positive outcomes in reducing disruptive behavior and promoting a conducive school culture (Konstantinidou et al., 2023).

Collaboration with Professionals and Parents

Collaboration with professionals and parents is essential in special education to ensure comprehensive support and effective strategies tailored to each student's unique needs.

Participant 3 shared the impact of collaborative learning activities to students learning.

Yes, especially when collaborating with other professionals, such as speech therapists, occupational therapists, and psychologists who ensures a holistic approach to addressing students' difficulties and provides a range of expertise to support their development.

("Collaboration with professionals like speech therapists, occupational therapists, and psychologists was vital for taking a holistic approach to addressing students' challenges and leveraging diverse expertise to support their development.") (P3, IDI 3)

Similarly, participant 4 also shared her experience,

I collaborated closely with general education teachers and other support staff to ensure that all students received the necessary accommodations and modifications.

("Collaborating closely with other teachers and support staff was crucial to ensuring that all students, including those with special needs, received the support they needed.") (P4, IDI 4)

In the same vein, participant 6 also shared,

Yes. Effective siya, specifically, offering regular opportunities for feedback and reflection which allows students to express their needs and preferences.

("Yes, it's effective, particularly offering regular opportunities for feedback and reflection, which enables students to voice their needs and preferences.") (P6, IDI 6)

The implication drawn from these findings underscores the significance of collaborative partnerships between professionals, educators, and parents in special education. Such collaborations facilitate a holistic approach to addressing students' diverse needs. These collaborations ensure that every student, including those with disabilities, receives individualized and comprehensive assistance for their academic and social development (Bowen & Kisida, 2023).

Creating an Inclusive Classroom Environment

Creating an inclusive classroom environment involves designing a space where all students feel valued, respected, and supported regardless of their background, abilities, or identities.

By implementing inclusive practices, educators can cultivate an environment that encourages collaboration, empathy, and understanding among students as Participant 4.

Yes. Kanang labi na karun ma'am, effective gyud ang pag provide og assistive technology tools, such as speech-to-text software or specialized keyboards.

("Yes. Especially now, it's really effective to provide assistive technology tools, such as speech-to-text software or specialized keyboards.") (P4, IDI 4)

In addition, participant 5 also shared the importance of assistive technology among SPED learners,

Katong gi tell nako ganina, dapat need mag integrate og assistive technology tools and devices to support students with disabilities in accessing the curriculum and enhancing their learning experience.

("When I mentioned earlier, it's important to integrate assistive technology tools and devices to support students with disabilities in accessing the curriculum and enhancing their learning experience.") (P5, IDI 5)

The findings underscore the critical role of assistive technology in fostering inclusivity within the classroom, facilitating access to the curriculum, and enhancing the learning experience for students with disabilities. The study of Singh and Pallai (2023) found that collaborative and inclusive methodologies within SPED education are important in establishing conducive learning atmospheres. The utilization of effective behavioral management techniques and the incorporation of assistive technologies are pivotal in the cultivation of an inclusive educational setting.

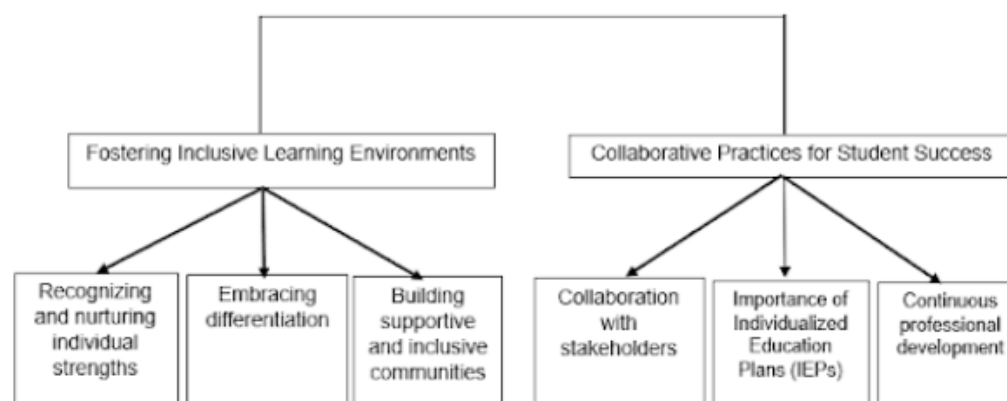


Figure 3. Insights Teacher teaching in inclusive classrooms

Presented in Figure 3 were the insights gained from the experiences of special education teachers teaching in inclusive classrooms, and were able to generate two major themes: Fostering Inclusive Learning Environments and Collaborative Practices for Students with six subthemes: Recognizing and nurturing individual strengths, Embracing differentiation, Building supportive and inclusive communities, Collaboration with stakeholders, Importance of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and Continuous professional development.

Fostering Inclusive Learning Environments

Fostering inclusive learning environments in education involves creating spaces where all students feel valued, respected, and supported regardless of their backgrounds, abilities, or identities. This approach prioritizes equity, diversity celebration, and cultivating a sense of belonging among learners.

Through collaborative efforts among teachers, families, and communities, inclusive learning environments promote academic success for all students, as shared by Participant 3.

Kailangan bitaw mag build ta og supportive and inclusive classroom community which fosters acceptance, empathy, and respect among all students.

("We really need to build a supportive and inclusive classroom community that fosters acceptance, empathy, and respect among all students.") (P3, IDI 3)

In the same vein, participant 4 also supported,

Yes, I would choose to teach in an inclusive classroom. Inclusion promotes a culture of acceptance and respect, where students of all abilities are valued members of the learning community.

("Yes, I would choose to teach in an inclusive classroom. Inclusion promotes a culture of acceptance and respect, where students of all abilities are valued members of the learning community.") (P4, IDI 4)

In addition, participant 6 also shared her feelings about being a SPED teacher,

Absolutely, I would still choose to be a SPED teacher. Ganahan gyud ko makahatag og learning sa mga bata naa'y special needs, challenging siya but it really create a sense of belonging and acceptance to lots of learn.

("Absolutely, I would still choose to be a SPED teacher. I really enjoy providing learning opportunities for children with special needs. It's challenging, but it truly creates a sense of belonging and acceptance for many learners.") (P6, IDI 6)

The emerging theme implied the importance of fostering inclusive learning environments that emphasize acceptance, empathy, and respect, which are essential for all students' academic and social success. The findings are supported by Corres-Medrano et al. (2022), who found that collaborative efforts of educators, families, and communities in fostering supportive and inclusive classrooms impact students' well-being and academic engagement.

Recognizing and nurturing individual strengths

Recognizing and nurturing individual strengths in education involves identifying and celebrating each student's unique talents, abilities, and interests. Educators can empower students to reach their full potential by acknowledging and building upon these strengths.

This approach fosters a positive learning environment where students feel valued, as Participant 1 shared.

Every student has unique strengths and abilities, regardless of their challenges or disabilities. Need pud nato ma recognized and nurtured these strengths for their academic and personal growth.

("Every student has unique strengths and abilities, regardless of their challenges or disabilities. We also need to recognize and nurture these strengths for their academic and personal growth.") (P1, IDI 1)

In the same vein, participant 6 also shared,

Absolutely, I would still choose to be a SPED teacher. Ganahan gyud ko makahatag og learning sa mga bata naa'y special needs, challenging siya but it really create a sense of belonging and acceptance to lots of learn.

("Absolutely, I would still choose to be a SPED teacher. I really enjoy providing learning to children with special needs. It's challenging, but it really creates a sense of belonging and acceptance for many to learn.") (P6, IDI 6)

The data highlights the importance of recognizing and nurturing individual strengths in students, which is crucial for their academic and personal growth. These findings are supported by Marsili et al. (2023), who found that inclusive teaching practices, which involve collaboration between general educators, special educators, and support staff, have been shown to enhance educational opportunities for differently abled students, promoting a culture of sharing knowledge and inclusive practices.

Embracing Differentiation

Embracing differentiation in education entails tailoring teaching methods, materials, and assessments to accommodate students' diverse needs and learning styles.

By embracing differentiation, educators can create inclusive classrooms where every student has the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential, as shared by Participant 1.

Yes gyud kayo ma'am. I would choose to teach in an inclusive classroom. Kaya ganahan gyud ko makahatag og difference sa life sa akong students. Maski lisod, kayahon gyud nako.

("Yes, absolutely, ma'am. I would choose to teach in an inclusive classroom. I really want to make a difference in the lives of my students. Even though it's challenging, I can handle it.") (P1, IDI 1)

In addition, participant 2 also shared,

Differentiation is key gyud ma'am. Tailoring instruction to meet the diverse needs of students ensures that everyone can access the curriculum and succeed at their own pace.

("Differentiation is really key, ma'am. Tailoring instruction to meet the diverse needs of students ensures that everyone can access the curriculum and succeed at their own pace.") (P2, IDI 2)

In the same vein, participant 3 also supported,

Sa wala gyud pag duha-duha ma'am, I would still choose to teach in an inclusive classroom. Inclusion promotes equity and diversity, challenging both students and SPED teachers to embrace differences and learn from one another.

("Without a doubt, ma'am, I would still choose to teach in an inclusive classroom. Inclusion promotes equity and diversity, challenging both students and SPED teachers to embrace differences and learn from one another.") (P3, IDI 3)

The emerging theme highlighted the critical role of differentiation in fostering inclusive classrooms, where educators tailor their teaching to meet all students' diverse needs and learning styles. A study by Yengkopiong (2023) found that by tailoring instruction to meet individual student needs, teachers can create a supportive environment where all learners can thrive.

Building supportive and inclusive communities

Building supportive and inclusive communities in education involves fostering environments where all individuals feel respected, valued, and empowered to contribute. By nurturing a sense of belonging and celebrating diversity, inclusive communities promote students' academic success, as experienced by participants 3.

Kailangan bitaw mag build ta og supportive and inclusive classroom community which fosters acceptance, empathy, and respect among all students.

("We really need to build a supportive and inclusive classroom community that fosters acceptance, empathy, and respect among all students.") (P3, IDI 3)

In the same vein, participant 4 also shared,

Yes, I would choose to teach in an inclusive classroom. Inclusion promotes a culture of acceptance and respect, where students of all

abilities are valued members of the learning community.

("Yes, I would choose to teach in an inclusive classroom. Inclusion promotes a culture of acceptance and respect, where students of all abilities are valued members of the learning community.") (P4, IDI 4)

In addition, participant 7 also supported,

Yes gyud kaayo! I would still choose to teach in a SPED classroom. Lahi ra gyud ang kalipay sa usa ka SPED teacher ma'am samot na pag makahatag na og help sa atong learners in which it allows them to have access in the same educational opportunities as their peers.

("Yes, absolutely! I would still choose to teach in a SPED classroom. The joy of being a SPED teacher is truly different, especially when providing help to our learners, allowing them to have access to the same educational opportunities as their peers.") (P7, IDI 7)

The data highlights the importance of building supportive and inclusive classroom communities to foster student acceptance, empathy, and respect. The emerging theme is supported by Gockel et al. (2022), who said that SPED teachers are encouraged to use inclusive language and engage in critical conversations to support historically minoritized students. De Villiers and De Jager (2021) supported this idea as they believe that teachers facilitating courageous conversations may experience vulnerability but play a crucial role in challenging systemic issues and promoting a sense of belonging among learners.

Collaborative Practices for Students

Collaborative practices for students in education emphasize the importance of teamwork, communication, and shared responsibility among peers to support learning and growth.

By engaging in collaborative activities, students develop essential skills such as communication, critical thinking, and empathy, preparing them for success in both academic and real-world settings, as shared by participant 1.

Yes gyud kayo ma'am. I would choose to teach in an inclusive classroom. Kaya ganahan gyud ko makahatag og difference sa life sa akong students. Maski lisod, kayahon gyud nako.

("Yes, definitely ma'am. I would choose to teach in an inclusive classroom. I really enjoy making a difference in my students' lives. Even though it's difficult, I can handle it.") (P1, IDI 1)

In addition, participant 4 also shared the importance of collaboration,

Collaboration with other SPED teachers, support staff, and families is essential for student success. Working together allows us to share insights, strategies, and resources to better meet the needs of all learners.

("Collaboration with other special education teachers, support staff, and families is essential for student success. Working together allows us to share insights, strategies, and resources to better meet the needs of all learners.") (P4, IDI 4)

In the same vein, participant 8 supported,

Yes, I would still choose to teach as SPED teacher. Kay sa ingani na pamaagi makahimo ko og opportunity nga makahatag og positive impact sa lives sa mga bata nga naa'y special needs.

("Yes, I would still choose to teach as a special education teacher. Through this approach, I can create opportunities to make a positive impact on the lives of children with special needs.") (P8, IDI 8)

The above theme implied the significance of collaborative practices in education, highlighting how teamwork among teachers, support staff, and families enhances the ability to meet diverse student needs effectively. Anindyawardhani et al. (2023) found that collaboration is crucial in fostering essential skills like communication and empathy among students, benefiting all learners, particularly those with special needs.

Collaboration with stakeholders

Collaboration with stakeholders in education is vital for creating comprehensive and effective support systems for students. This approach involves engaging educators, parents, community members, and other relevant parties to contribute their expertise, resources, and perspectives to improve student outcomes.

By fostering open communication and shared decision-making, collaboration with stakeholders helps ensure that the diverse needs of students are met holistically and inclusively, as shared by Participant 4.

Collaboration with other SPED teachers, support staff, and families is essential for student success. Working together allows us to share insights, strategies, and resources to better meet the needs of all learners.

("Collaboration with other SPED teachers, support staff, and families is essential for student success. Working together allows us to share insights, strategies, and resources to better meet the needs of all learners.") (P4, IDI 4)

In addition, participant 6 shared her feelings toward being a SPED teacher,

Absolutely, I would still choose to be a SPED teacher. Ganahan gyud ko makahatag og learning sa mga bata naa'y special needs, challenging siya but it really creates a sense of belonging and acceptance to lots of learn.

("Absolutely, I would still choose to be a SPED teacher. I really enjoy providing learning to children with special needs. It's challenging, but it truly creates a sense of belonging and acceptance for many to learn.") (P6, IDI 6)

In the same manner, participant 7 also supported,

Yes gyud kaayo! I would still choose to teach in a SPED classroom. Lahi ra gyud ang kalipay sa usa ka SPED teacher ma'am samot na pag makahatag na og help sa atong learners in which it allows them to have access in the same educational opportunities as their peers.

("Yes, absolutely! I would still choose to teach in a SPED classroom. The joy of a SPED teacher is different, especially when providing help to our learners, allowing them to have access to the same educational opportunities as their peers.") (P7, IDI 7)

The data highlights the critical role of stakeholder collaboration in education, particularly in special education, where diverse insights and resources from teachers, support staff, and families are essential for addressing the unique needs of students. The findings are supported by Kamalı-Arslantaş and Yalçın (2023), who found that fostering a collaborative environment among educators is crucial for creating inclusive and supportive learning experiences.

Importance of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)

Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) ensure that students with disabilities receive personalized support tailored to their unique learning needs. These plans are collaboratively developed documents that outline specific goals, accommodations, and services to facilitate each student's academic and social-emotional growth.

By providing a roadmap for educators, parents, and specialists to follow, IEPs promote equity, inclusion, and success for students with diverse abilities, as shared by Participant 1.

Yes gyud kayo ma'am. I would choose to teach in an inclusive classroom. Kaya ganahan gyud ko makahatag og difference sa life sa akong students. Maski lisod, kayahon gyud nako.

("Yes, indeed ma'am. I would choose to teach in an inclusive classroom. I really want to make a difference in my students' lives. Even though it's tough, I can handle it.") (P1, IDI 1)

In addition, participant 2, supported,

Yes po, SPED teaching gihapon akooa pillion kay it really an opportunity for students with special needs to learn alongside their typically developing peers, which can lead to increased academic and social growth.

("Yes, indeed. I still choose SPED teaching because it's a real opportunity for students with special needs to learn alongside their typically developing peers, which can lead to increased academic and social growth.") (P2, IDI 2)

Furthermore, participant 7 shared the same,

Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are powerful tools for guiding instruction and support. As a SPED teacher need gyud naa'y regularly reviewing and updating IEPs ensures that they accurately reflect each student's current needs and goals.

("Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are powerful tools for guiding instruction and support. As a SPED teacher, it's important to regularly review and update IEPs to ensure that they accurately reflect each student's current needs and goals.") (P7, IDI 7)

The emerging theme underscores the critical importance of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in supporting students with disabilities, ensuring they receive tailored instruction and services that address their needs. A study by Leifler (2023) supported these findings by revealing that regularly reviewing and updating Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) is crucial for maintaining an inclusive and equitable learning environment supporting all students' academic and social-emotional growth.

Continuous professional development

Continuous professional development (CPD) is essential for educators to stay updated with the latest research, methodologies, and technologies. It involves ongoing learning opportunities that enable teachers to enhance their skills, knowledge, and teaching practices throughout their careers.

By engaging in CPD, SPED teachers can improve student outcomes, adapt to changing educational landscapes, and foster a culture of lifelong learning in schools, as shared by Participant 6.

Absolutely, I would still choose to be a SPED teacher. Ganahan gyud ko makahatag og learning sa mga bata naa'y special needs, challenging siya but it really create a sense of belonging and acceptance to lots of learn.

("Absolutely, I would still choose to be a SPED teacher. I really enjoy providing learning to children with special needs, even though it's challenging, but it really creates a sense of belonging and acceptance for many.") (P6, IDI 6)

Furthermore, participant 8 also supported,

Continual professional development is importante pud gyud ma'am to stay informed about best practices, interventions, and advancements in the field of special education.

("Continual professional development is also important to stay informed about best practices, interventions, and advancements in the field of special education.") (P8, IDI 8)

The emerging theme was supported by Vlcek and Somerton (2023), who found that effective collaboration among various stakeholders plays a pivotal role in assisting students with disabilities. Implementing inclusive teaching methodologies, such as establishing a community of practice for educators to devise inclusive teaching approaches collectively. Castle (2023) also supported this, saying that the advantages of mainstreaming practices have been underscored by families of children with special needs and the significance of cooperation with school administrators and teachers.

Conclusions

The teaching experiences of special education (SPED) teachers in inclusive classrooms were marked by a commitment to addressing the diverse learning needs of their students. Teachers highlighted the necessity of personalized education plans (IEPs), differentiated instruction, and the incorporation of multisensory teaching methods to accommodate varying abilities and learning styles. Participants expressed the importance of adapting instructional strategies, collaborating with stakeholders, and navigating the challenges associated with inadequate resources and funding. Teachers often faced resistance and a lack of understanding from some administrators, colleagues, and parents, which further complicated their efforts to provide effective inclusive education.

SPED teachers coped with the challenges in inclusive classrooms through a combination of instructional strategies and support systems. They emphasized the use of individualized education plans (IEPs) and differentiated instruction to meet the unique needs of each student. Teachers also utilized assistive technology to enhance accessibility and learning outcomes. Positive behavior management techniques and creating supportive classroom environments were crucial for promoting desirable behaviors and engagement. Collaboration with professionals, such as speech and occupational therapists, as well as close communication with parents, were vital in providing comprehensive support to students. Continuous professional development played a significant role in equipping teachers with the latest methodologies and best practices in special education.

The lived experiences of SPED teachers in inclusive classrooms revealed a deep commitment to fostering inclusive learning environments that value diversity and promote a sense of belonging among all students. Teachers experienced the rewarding aspects of making a difference in their students' lives despite the significant challenges. They highlighted the importance of building supportive and inclusive classroom communities, embracing differentiation, and collaborating with stakeholders to enhance educational outcomes. Teachers also underscored the significance of ongoing professional development to stay informed about advancements in the field and to continuously improve their teaching practices. These experiences collectively illustrated the dedication and resilience of SPED teachers in creating equitable and effective learning environments for students with special needs.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to address the research questions regarding the experiences and coping mechanisms of special education teachers in inclusive education:

Enhance Professional Development and Training. Special education teachers consistently highlighted the need for ongoing professional development and training. It is recommended that educational institutions may provide regular and targeted training sessions focusing on inclusive education practices, differentiated instruction, and behavior management strategies. These sessions may be designed to equip teachers with the skills necessary to effectively address the diverse learning needs of students with disabilities.

Foster Collaboration and Stakeholder Involvement. The importance of collaboration among educators, parents, administrators, and other stakeholders was a recurrent theme. Schools may implement structured collaboration frameworks that encourage regular communication and partnership among all parties involved in a student's education. This can be achieved through scheduled meetings, collaborative planning sessions, and shared resources.

Increase Access to Resources and Funding. Teachers frequently reported challenges in accessing necessary resources and funding. It is maybe important for schools and educational authorities to ensure that adequate resources, such as assistive technology, specialized materials, and additional support staff, are readily available. This maybe facilitated by securing dedicated funding streams for special education and advocating for increased budget allocations.

Implement Comprehensive Support Systems. To cope with the demands of inclusive classrooms, teachers need robust support systems. Schools may establish mentorship programs where experienced special education teachers can provide guidance and support to their less experienced colleagues. Additionally, creating a support network that includes counselors, therapists, and other specialists may also help address the multifaceted needs of students and alleviate the workload of special education teachers.

Conduct Further Research on Effective Strategies. Future researchers may continue to explore and identify the most effective strategies for special education. This may includes investigating innovative teaching methods, the impact of different inclusive practices, and the effectiveness of various support systems. Research may also focus on longitudinal studies to assess the long-term outcomes of students with disabilities in inclusive settings.

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Affiliations and Corresponding Information

Analiza A. Miña

Alejandra L. Navarro Central Elementary School
Department of Education – Philippines