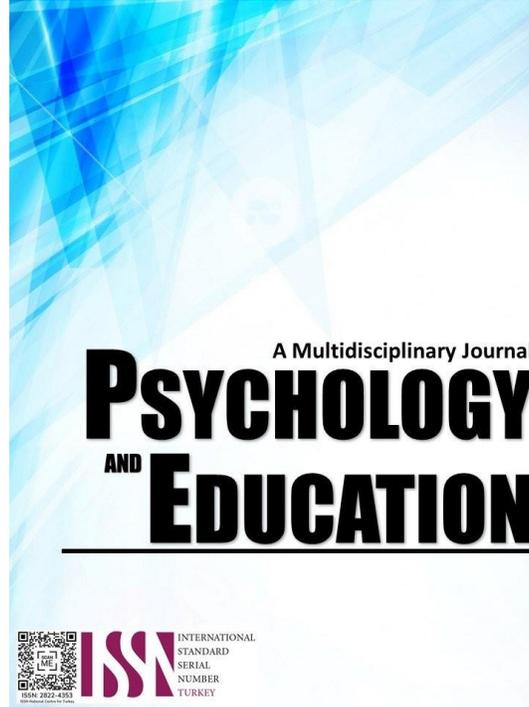# TECH AND TENDER CARE: UNTOLD STORIES OF PARENTS IN SELECTING ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR THEIR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Tech and Tender Care: Untold Stories of Parents in Selecting Assistive Technology for their Children with Special Needs

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Abstract

This study set out to understand the real-life experiences of parents as they chose and used assistive technology (AT) for their children with special needs. A qualitative research design was used to gain in-depth insights into the experiences of parents in Tarlac, Philippines. Ten parents with experience using AT for their children were selected through purposive sampling. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using Collaizi method. The findings revealed both positive and negative experiences, grouped into five categories: (1) Concerns regarding AT, (2) Types and uses of AT, (3) Support and accessibility, (4) Results for the child and his/her environment, and (5) Financial considerations and advice. The study has shown the challenges and benefits of selecting AT, consistent with existing literature. This research made a difference by putting the spotlight on parents' voices, which are often missed in conversations about assistive technology. It captured not just the practical side of using AT, but also the emotional and social experiences that come with it. By sharing the real experiences of parents and how they adjust, this study gives helpful and relatable stories. These stories can guide better rules, improve support for families, and inspire better and more family-focused ways of creating and using assistive technology.

Keywords: *assistive technology, children with special needs, collaizi method, parents' lived experiences, qualitative research*

Introduction

In a world where every child deserves to be heard, the journey of parents finding the right assistive technology (AT) for their children with special needs shows deep love, strength, and hope. Using AT is not just about the devices, but also about giving children more chances to learn, connect, and take part in everyday life. By listening to parents' stories, we learn about the real struggles they face and the smart, caring ways they help their children. Their experiences remind us that assistive tools should not only be easy to get and useful, but also truly helpful for each child's unique needs.

Children with special needs face developmental challenges that affect movement, cognition, communication, behavior, and sensory abilities. These conditions, rooted in the nervous system, can lead to disabilities, and when combined with environmental challenges, they may limit a child's ability to fully participate in society, just like other children (WHO, 2023). Examples of these conditions include autism, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Cerebral Palsy, down syndrome, deafness, blindness, intellectual disabilities, speech, or language difficulties, and physical or health-related challenges (Swetz, 2021).

Parents who have children with special needs often face unique challenges that require specific care and attention. The role of special needs parenting goes beyond just raising a child with unique abilities, and it requires extra care, attention, and support, (Chang-Williams, 2023). Caring for a child with a disability presents unique challenges for families, often requiring substantial adjustments in their daily lives and can have various effects on their health (Moosa-Tayob & Risenga, 2022).

In today's ever-changing world, technology is transforming many parts of life, including education, healthcare, and assistive technology (AT). New digital tools, AI-powered devices, and smart technologies are giving parents more options to support their children with special needs. For children with impairments, having access to assistive technology is frequently the first step toward their early growth, education, involvement in sports and civic life, and preparation for the workforce like their peers.

However, as they develop, children with impairments have extra challenges that necessitate regular replacements or adjustments to their assistive devices (WHO-UNICEF, 2022). "Assistive technology" refers to devices or systems that help people with disabilities, limited mobility, or other limitations carry out tasks that might be otherwise be challenging or impossible (Gov.UK, 2024). Through the preservation or improvement of an individual's cognitive, linguistic, auditory, motor, self-care, and visual functioning, assistive tools foster their involvement, inclusion, and overall health. (WHO, 2024).

There are various types of assistive devices which are designed to aid people in various scenarios, addressing specific accessibility needs. These needs can be categorized into four main areas. The first area is visual, which includes devices and software designed for individuals who are blind, have low vision, or are color blind. The second area is auditory, which focuses on software for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. The third area is motor, which provides support for individuals with limited motor control.

Finally, cognitive assistive technologies are designed for individuals with learning disabilities, attention disorders, memory impairments, and other cognitive challenges. These technologies help to ensure that all individuals can participate more fully in society, despite their unique challenges (Drew, 2023). Reading, writing, and mathematics are among the topics where students who struggle with learning might benefit from assistive technology, and many people also utilize these tools at work (Lee, 2023).

To support these children, parents need effective strategies to help them meet their child's needs. By using the right tools and adopting a compassionate approach, they can create a nurturing and empowering environment where their child can thrive and develop (Doyle et al., 2022). Many children benefit from tools and strategies that support their learning, communication, and independence, including multisensory learning approaches. Through interactive games, hands-on exercises, and visual aids that reinforce learning and skill development, educational activities that incorporate auditory, visual, kinesthetic, and tactile elements improve comprehension and engagement (Gryffin, 2024).

Teachers and family members must understand the unique needs of children with special needs to give the right support. Early care and intervention help prevent exclusion and reduce developmental challenges. Teachers must be aware of the characteristics, challenges, and educational needs of these children to plan effective interventions. Family, siblings, and teachers play a crucial role in creating a supportive environment where children can thrive. Understanding their needs is important not only for education but also for choosing the right tools to help them grow and participate in society (Chandra, 2021).

One of the most important tools in this process is assistive technology, which enhances abilities and promotes independence. Supporting children with special needs aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), which emphasizes the need for inclusive education for all. By giving equal chances and the right tools, we can help children with special needs feel included in school and in the world around them.

With the right support, therapy, and care, they can face challenges, grow, and live happy and meaningful lives. For many of these children, using assistive technology is the first big step. It helps them learn, play, join in community activities, and even get ready for future jobs. It opens doors that once felt closed, showing them what they can truly do. It's not just about tools, rather it's about giving every child the chance to grow, connect, and thrive.

This also connects to a bigger goal, like Sustainable Development Goal 10, which is all about reducing inequality. It reminds us that children with physical or learning challenges should not be left out. They deserve the same chances as everyone else to grow, learn, and be part of society. And with Goal 3, focused on good health and well-being, assistive tech plays a key role by providing the support children need to stay strong both physically and emotionally. Still, as kids grow, their needs change—so it's important their devices grow with them, too, through regular updates or replacements (UNICEF, 2023).

Although current research has made progress in examining the usability, affordability, and accessibility of assistive technology (Jansens & Bonarini, 2020), there is still a lack of studies that explore the personal and day-to-day realities faced by parents. Most existing work focuses on technical features or policy improvements, yet we know little about how these efforts truly support families in real-life situations. The emotional aspects, the difficult decisions, and the practical challenges parents navigate when choosing and using assistive tools are often left unspoken.

While policies aim to improve access and increase the availability of trained professionals, there remains limited understanding of how these initiatives impact families on the ground, therefore showing a clear need for research that places parents lived experiences at the center, offering a deeper look at what works, what doesn't, and what truly matters to them.

Addressing issues such as awareness, affordability, and availability must go hand in hand with rethinking how services are delivered. At the same time, the shortage of skilled professionals must be addressed through focused training efforts (Smith, 2022). More importantly, access to assistive technology should not be treated as a privilege but as a right, which should be supported by inclusive policies, responsive systems, and programs that genuinely meet the needs of children and families (Ebuenyi et al., 2023).

This study looks into the real experiences of parents as they choose and use assistive technology (AT) for their children with special needs. By learning from what they have been through, this aims to show what helps parents make better choices and how AT is making a difference in the children's lives. It looks closely at the emotional, practical, and financial challenges they face, and explores the key factors that shape their decisions, such as their child's unique needs, the availability of resources, professional guidance, and access to suitable devices. Also, the study will examine how assistive technology affects family life. It will explore its impact on relationships within the family, emotional impact, the child's ability to connect with others, well-being, and independence.

Through these insights, the research hopes to have a fuller picture of both the struggles and the positive outcomes that families experience. What makes this study unique is its focus on the human side of the journey. While much of the existing research centers on technical features or policy frameworks, there is still little known about how this influences the daily lives of families. By emphasizing parents' personal and emotional experiences, this study aims to fill a meaningful gap in current literature and offer valuable insights that can inform more compassionate policies, stronger support systems, and better-designed services for families of children with special needs.

In addition, this research helps give a fuller picture of assistive technology, looking not only at how easy it is to use and access, but also at the emotional and social effects it has on families. By listening to their stories, the research hopes to bring about change that improves access to technology and makes life better for families, giving children with special needs the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Research Questions

Parents of children with special needs face many challenges, regardless of their child's disability. While assistive technology can help their child's development, learning, and well-being, choosing, obtaining, and using the right tool can be tough. This study aims to understand what parents go through when making decisions about assistive technology (AT) for their children. It will look at the problems parents face, what helps them choose the right tools, the support they receive, and how these tools help their child and family. By learning from their real-life stories, the study hopes to help improve rules, support, and resources that will really help families like theirs. To guide the research, the following questions are posed:

1. What are the experiences of parents when choosing assistive technology (AT) for their child, and what factors influenced their decisions?
2. How do parents learn about different AT options, and what kind of support or help do they receive from schools, professionals, or the community?
3. How do parents decide which type of AT is best for their child, and what financial concerns or challenges do they face?
4. What changes have parents observed in their child's learning, communication, behavior, or daily life after using AT?
5. How has using AT affected the family's daily life and relationships?

Methodology

Research Design

To gain a depth knowledge and understanding on the research topic, a qualitative approach was utilized to explore the lived experiences of parents in choosing assistive technology for their child/children with special needs in the province of Tarlac. A phenomenological type of qualitative research was used to explore and have a wider understanding of the participants' experiences (Cresswell, 2014) through conversational interviewing.

Conversational interviewing is a method in qualitative research that is mainly used to capture in-depth exploration of the informants' experiences (Skukauskaitė & Sullivan, 2022). Conversational interviewing in the study was conducted in four parts: (1) introduction, the purpose of which is to introduce the research concern to the informants and learn about their background as well, thus creating rapport; (2) open conversation, the purpose of which is to ask initial questions leading to the main concern of the research; (3) cleanup, the purpose of which is to ask clarificatory questions in order to understand vague responses; and (4) wrap-up, in order to allow the informants to elaborate more on their experiences, if there is a need to, and thanking the informants for their participation.

Participants

This study involved ten (10) participants through purposive sampling technique. Specifically, participants were chosen based on these following criteria: 1.) Participants are parents who are the main decision-makers in selecting and using assistive technology (AT) for their child with special needs. 2.) The child is diagnosed with a neurodevelopmental disability, such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome, or other conditions that need AT for learning or daily activities. 3.) Parents experienced actively using and managing AT for their child. 4.) Participants are living in Tarlac, Philippines. 5.) Participants were willing to share their experiences through interview.

In order to capture different perspectives, a maximum variation was observed. The participants came from different areas in Tarlac, Philippines with various age range from 23-76 years old and with diverse child diagnosis, allowing the researchers to capture the various experiences of parents regarding the research topic. Convenience sampling method was used to the initial qualified participants, followed by the snowball sampling techniques where the participants suggested qualified participants to the researchers.

Instrument

This study used two ways to gather information: semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires. The interview questionnaires were validated by the following: 1. School Principal 2. Language Expert 3. Qualitative Research Expert. Recommendations were followed strictly before the data collection was conducted.

The semi-structured interviews allowed parents to talk freely and share their experiences in more detail. For those who preferred writing, the open-ended questionnaires gave them a chance to share their thoughts as well. These questionnaires helped parents explain their decision-making process, the challenges they faced, and their views on assistive technology (AT). By using both methods, the study was able to get a wide range of answers while making sure parents could choose the method, they felt most comfortable with. The interviews were done in person, at a time that worked for the participants, and were recorded with their permission to ensure the information was accurate.

Data Analysis

This study used the Colaizzi method to analyze the data. A type of phenomenological method of analysis that follows systematic procedures to capture and comprehensively understand the experiences of participants through meticulous stages, emphasizing their importance of their lived experiences (Edward & Welch, 2011).

To be specific, the recorded interviews were transcribed using TurboScribe online application. Transcriptions were read several times to understand what the parents shared. Important statements about their experiences were highlighted and reviewed to find their true meaning. Similar ideas were grouped into common themes to form the key parts of their experiences. A summary of these themes was created to present the findings clearly. The results were then checked to make sure they accurately reflected the parents' views, and participants were asked to confirm the findings. This method helped the study provide a clear understanding of how parents chose and used assistive technology for their children.

Ethical Considerations

In this research, the ethical considerations of qualitative research were adopted with the study of Mirza, Bellalem, and Mirza (2023), where the researchers sent the informed consent to the participants via messenger, emphasizing the purpose of the study, procedures, how the data collected will be used and discussing the rights of the participants before the data gathering will be conducted.

To protect the personal details and identity of parents and children, their names were not shared. Pseudonyms were used instead, and all data was stored securely. Participation in the study was purely voluntary; the researcher also discussed the participant's right to withdraw and not answer or skip question/s at any time without any negative consequences.

Respect for different cultures and beliefs about disabilities and assistive technology was maintained throughout the study. Questions were asked respectfully and unbiasedly, and the findings truly reflected the parents' experiences. The data collection was done face-to-face from different places in the Tarlac Province. A total of eight (8) were conducted through interviews and two (2) through writing, as the participants requested. The saturation point was already reached with the 8th informant, but the researchers interviewed the 9th and 10th informant for validation. Data saturation in qualitative research means that data has been fully explored and no new categories or themes emerge (Naeem et al., 2024).

Results and Discussion

The participants shared their valuable experiences in selecting assistive technology for their child with special needs. Table 1 describes the demographic profile of the informants showing their different backgrounds in supporting children with special needs.

Table 1. *Demographic profile of the informants*

Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Locality	Diagnosis of Child
Albert	Male	23	Moncada, Tarlac	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Autism Spectrum Disorder
Ashley	Female	52	Capas, Tarlac	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
Bob	Male	50	Tarlac, Tarlac	Autism Spectrum Disorder
Carol	Female	37	San Sebastian, Tarlac	Down Syndrome
Danie	Female	51	Capas, Tarlac	High-Functioning Autism
Erica	Female	41	Capas, Tarlac	Quadriplegia Cerebral Palsy
Jack	Male	43	Capas, Tarlac	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and hearing impairment
Owen	Male	50	Bamban, Tarlac	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
Richard	Male	47	Concepcion, Tarlac	Executive Dysfunction
Ryan	Male	76	Sto. Cristo, Tarlac	Autism

Five significant themes were identified in the data from the interviews conducted, specifically: a.) Challenges in choosing assistive technology Assistive Technology b.) Types and Uses of Assistive Technology c.) Support & Accessibility d.) A.T impact on Child, and e.) Financial Considerations & Advice. These categories were related to each other to capture the full meaning of the phenomenon.

Table 2. *Summary of open codes, axial codes, and categories*

Initial codes	Clusters	Themes
selection of AT	decision-making of parents	challenges regarding assistive technology
cost		
usage difficulty	implementation challenges	
educational integration		
used AT for improved communication and focus	AT for skill development	types and uses of assistive technology
used AT for learning enhancement		
created customized AT based on the child's needs	personalized AT solutions	
self-made assistive technology		
consulted experts and professionals	seeking guidance and online resources	support and accessibility
gathered information through online research		
joined support groups/parent networks	community and institutional support	
received support from schools		
received support from healthcare and government programs		
desired improvements or lacked support/guidance		

personal growth	child's development	A.T impact on Child
long-term impact		
helped build confidence and independence	daily life and social changes	
improved daily routines		
enhanced social interaction		
strengthens family bonds	family relationship	
innate bonding approach		
minimizing expenses	managing finances	financial considerations and advice
saving up for more advanced AT		
prioritized affordability and alternatives	guidance for parents of special needs children	
choose the right AT through observation/assessment		
advise to balance AT and personal connection		
encouraged parents to try AT despite challenges		

Theme 1: Challenges in choosing assistive technology

This theme talks about the challenges parents face when choosing the right assistive technology (AT) for their child. The process can be stressful because AT can be expensive, there's often not enough support available, and parents are not always sure if the tool will work well for their child's specific needs. Many parents struggle with trial-and-error approaches, leading to frustration and delays in providing proper support.

These challenges are best illustrated by Danie's statement:

"I had a hard time in selecting assistive technology for my son, it depends on what he knows and how will he operate certain technology. I did not get any support from the local community and the school."

Carol expressed a similar sentiment:

"Cost was a challenge because most assistive technology are expensive. Also, I wish there had been more hands-on training. Although I figured things out over time, it would have been better if we had guidance back then."

Ashley also aired her concern:

"I wish there were more teacher training on how to integrate AT into the classroom effectively… but some teachers don't naturally use them (assistive technology) in class, so it still becomes a struggle, right?"

These findings are parallel to extant literature. For example, Arslan-Ari and Başer (2022) found that many special education teachers complete their training without sufficient knowledge and skills in using assistive technology. This suggests that even before entering the classroom as full-time teachers, they are not adequately prepared, which may lead to difficulties in confidently and effectively integrating AT into actual classroom practice, as reflected in the parent's concern. Similarly, Campado et al. (2023) recommend seeking guidance from organizations to determine effective professional development programs, indicating a need for structured training initiatives. The lack of training, along with high costs and limited accessibility of AT, are significant barriers that hinder the effective use of assistive technology for children with disabilities. Recent study of Osam et al. (2021), show that parents face many difficulties when choosing the right assistive technology (AT) for their children it also revealed that parents considered AT as beneficial but they still struggling in finding the right devices considering their limited financial resources. These obstacles make it harder for parents to fully utilize the assistive technology to support their children's needs.

Theme 2: Types and uses of assistive technology

This theme focuses on the different types of assistive technology (AT) that the children with special needs often used. These tools support the children in developing their communication, concentration, and skills. Parents often select AT to enhance their child's learning experience and create personalized tools that address their child's unique needs. Personalized AT solutions are designed to ensure the technology works best for the child, helping them learn and grow more effectively.

This is echoed in Albert's description:

"...they're using different software which can help the child develop his speech mechanism. Application which practices speech, like phonics and songs. He knows how to search the internet as well, he became organized in a lot of things.

The value of AT in building social and focus skills is captured in Jack's reflection:

"The most effective AT my youngest child uses for his listening, concentration, and social interaction are tabletop activities and toys, interactive sound puzzles, musical toys, talking flashcards."

Richard demonstrated this through his use of customized solutions:

"Instead of a specialized visual planner, I made a customized chart, like a small whiteboard and printed schedules."

Recent research shows that interactive toys and activities, like sound puzzles, musical toys, and talking flashcards, can help children improve skills like listening, focus, and socializing. Mukhtarkyzy et al. (2025) found that devices like speech-generating tools and communication boards help children with disabilities communicate better, making it easier for them to be part of school life. Khodaveisi et al. (2025) also mentioned that apps with images and animations help non-verbal children express themselves. These tools can be made to suit each child's needs, making communication and learning easier. In the study of Kasuya-Ueba et al. (2020) revealed that music activities are beneficial for the brain functions of a child with special needs, helping them to focus on what they are doing. Shichida Australia (2023) also mentioned that talking flashcards help children learn faster by using both sight and sound. To improve the different skills of a child with special needs like listening, focusing, and socializing a play-based learning with interactive toys and games must be employ (Crittenden & Gray, 2024). All these examples can help the parents in choosing the right AT to support their child's needs.

Theme 3: Support and accessibility

This category explores how parents seek help when choosing assistive technology (AT) for their child. Many parents turn to experts, professionals, or online resources for advice. They may also join support groups or ask schools, healthcare providers, or government programs for guidance. However, some parents face difficulties because there aren't enough support and resources available, making it harder for them to find the right AT for their child.

Owen emphasized the importance of accessible support:

"Other parents were my biggest help. I spoke to his occupational therapist and read articles online."

Erica discussed the role of personal effort and public support:

"We gathered information from our child's doctor and through independent research. Currently, we receive free education and medical assistance from the local government in our town."

Bob expresses the reality many parents face:

 "Honestly, support for children with ASD is really lacking. I wish there were free speech and occupational therapy services, especially for families who cannot afford regular sessions."

The challenges parents face in getting assistive technology (AT) for their children often include financial problems, lack of support, and limited resources. Thawisuk et al. (2022) pointed out that occupational therapists play an important role in helping families with AT, but not all families have access to these professionals, making it harder to get the support they need. Research also shows that talking to other parents of children with disabilities can be really helpful. It provides emotional support, reduces stress, and helps parents manage better. Dodds and Walch (2022) found that this kind of support helps parents cope with challenges and become stronger. Lancaster et al. (2022) said that connecting with other parents creates a sense of community, which is very important for those raising children with disabilities. Public support systems, like free education and medical services from local governments, are also key to making AT accessible. Laryea-Adjei (2024) emphasized that affordable AT helps prevent stigma and exclusion, showing the need for public support. Additionally, Jakovchevska and Chichevska-Jovanova (2024) found that parents who advocate for and search for AT have a positive impact on their children's education. Ava (2024) noted that many families struggle with high costs and limited insurance coverage for therapy, making it difficult for them to access the care they need.

Theme 4: Assistive Technology Impact on Child

This category focuses on the positive effects of assistive technology (AT) on both the child and their family. Many parents observed improvements in their child's focus, communication, social skills, and independence after using AT. These changes not only helped the child but also made daily life easier and more enjoyable for the whole family.

This is reflected in the positive developmental changes observed by Bob:

"...she understands more easily. She becomes more engaged and doesn't lose interest quickly. She is becoming more expressive, even though her communication is not yet verbal."

Danie illustrates the long-term impact of AT:

"...he is confident in working by himself and he learned to search information by himself. AT becomes a part of my son's daily routine, he will use AT and progress."

Jack shows the influence of AT:

"Because of assistive technology, our child now has a more structured routine. In terms of social interaction, AT has also had a big impact on his bond with his older siblings. Because of these toys, they now have a natural way to bond. I did not expect that it would not only help my youngest, but also strengthen the bonding and relationship of my children."

Research has consistently shown the positive impact of assistive technology (AT) on children with disabilities and their families.

According to Botelho (2021), AT plays an important role in helping children with disabilities grow and take part in activities, improving their communication and social interactions, which helps with their overall development and inclusion. Fins et al. (2023) said that assistive technology (AT) helps children become more independent. This lessens the pressure on parents and helps the whole family get along better. Research shows that AT makes a big difference in how children communicate, especially those who can't speak. Timms (2025) found that these tools help improve communication, so children can take part more. Nika et al. (2023) showed that AT helps children with intellectual disabilities do daily tasks more easily, which improves their lives. It also builds their confidence and helps them follow routines. Van Dam et al. (2023) added that AT gives children more control by letting them make choices, which helps them feel more confident. Hreish (2025) found that AT also helps children join family and community activities by improving their independence and social skills. These studies show that AT is very helpful for children's growth and for making family life better.

Category 5: Financial considerations and advice

This part talks about the financial challenges parents face when getting assistive technology (AT) for their children. Many parents need to use their savings or look for financial help just to afford the tools. They often try to find cheaper options that still work well. Picking the right AT isn't easy because parents have to think about both the price and how much it will help their child. At the same time, it's important to stay close and connected with the child while using the technology. Even with financial challenges, parents are encouraged to try AT because it can make a big difference in their child's life, even if resources are limited.

Ashley stated the considerations she took into account:

"...although you have to consider that (the cost) as well because it will affect your budgeting. But my priority is finding the most effective tools that truly support their needs and development. Sometimes the tools are too expensive, so I look for more affordable alternatives, especially for visual AT, which I sometimes make at home instead of buying."

Owen shared his strategies:

"I know it takes time to adjust, so I'm being patient. I'm also saving up for other tools. But they are expensive. I always try to look for free or discounted options first. The best advice I can give is to really observe your child before choosing any assistive technology. Just pay attention to what they struggle with the most."

Ryan emphasized the importance of love and family support:

"Things like his toys or tablet are just instruments, but the true key to a child's growth is love, understanding, and support from the family."

These are parallel with the findings of Carraro et al. (2023) in which health-related costs, including assistive devices, are a heavy burden on families with children with disabilities. Parents often find out about assistive products through informal sources and struggle to afford them, leading to unmet needs. Similarly, the WHO (2022) highlights that affordability is a major issue, as some often rely on family and friends for financial help. Long (2025) mentions that parents face financial challenges when getting AT, managing costs through savings or financial help while focusing on affordability.

Despite these challenges, parents are encouraged to carefully consider AT options, balancing cost and effectiveness, while maintaining a strong connection with their child. Walsh (2024) points out that families can manage financial difficulties by first identifying their child's needs and looking for free or low-cost resources for effective and affordable tools. Mettler et al. (2021) say that some families choose to make their own assistive technology (AT) because it can save money and also feel more personal. Doing things yourself can be a smart way to meet your child's needs without spending too much. This also shows how important family support is for a child's growth. Kidder and King (2022) explain that feeling loved by parents and grandparents helps children feel happier and stronger. Love, care, and staying close to the child matter a lot, especially when they're using AT, because it helps them feel safe, learn better, and grow with confidence.

Conclusions

This study looked at the experiences of parents in Tarlac, Philippines, who have children with special needs. It found that choosing and using assistive technology (AT) was both challenging and helpful for them. Parents made choices based on what their child needed, advice from experts, money concerns, and what was available around them.

Many parents had a hard time because AT can be expensive, and there wasn't always enough information or support. Some didn't know how to use the tools properly at first. But even with these struggles, parents didn't give up. They tried to learn on their own, asked for help from others, and found simple ways to make things work. Because of their effort, their children got better at talking, learning, and doing things on their own.

AT also helped parents feel stronger and more in charge. It pushed them to speak up for their child's needs. This study shows that assistive technology can really help both children and their families. But it also shows how important it is for schools, health workers, and the community to offer more help, like training, support, and making AT more affordable, so that more families can use it and see good results.

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