

TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE ON THE BEHAVIOR AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT PROFICIENCY TOWARD LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SETTINGS

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Abstract

Inclusive education is based on the ethical principle of providing equal access to quality education for every student. It entails integrating Learners with Special Education Needs (LSEN) into general education classrooms, supported by effective learning strategies. This research aims to investigate the experiences and perceptions of teachers at Marigondon Elementary School in the Division of Lapu-Lapu during the school year 2024-2025 regarding the management of behavioral challenges presented by LSEN in mainstream classrooms. Using a qualitative phenomenological research approach, the researcher conducted individual interviews with deliberately chosen teacher participants to uncover strategies that improve inclusive practices. A set of researcher-created guide questions was utilized to collect information, and the data obtained was analyzed through thematic analysis. Five main themes emerged from this analysis, including handling classroom dynamics, Approaches for inclusive classrooms, strategies to address behavioral challenges, crafting a helpful and supportive environment, and embracing and adapting classroom management strategies to accommodate LSEN. Findings stressed the significance of establishing clear rules, integrating technology, designing engaging activities, and collaboration with peers and parents as effective strategies. Encouraging engagement through positive reinforcement, establishing clear routines, and maximizing peer support were also found to be essential strategy in managing classes. Teachers emphasized the need for empathy, respect, and personalized strategies to promote inclusivity. The study concluded that tailored teaching methods, consistent communication with parents, and reward systems effectively motivated LSEN to behave and perform positively. Based on the results, the researcher recommends collaboration with parents, providing training to teachers, and conducting a regular forum for sharing best practices and recognizing teachers' innovations in managing classroom dynamics.

Keywords: Inclusive education, learners with special educational needs, behavior and classroom management, qualitative phenomenological design, Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu.

Introduction

Inclusive instruction is progressively viewed as main component of instructional impartiality, guaranteeing that all toddlers have approach to an excellent, approachable, and all-encompassing instruction. The Department of Education arrange mainstreaming adolescents accompanying Special Educational Needs (SEN) into normal classes place they can benefit from friendly unification and state of equality, as defined in the 1987 Constitution, Republic Acts 10533, and 11650. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 15-20% of adolescents general have few in a way disadvantage, with around 1.6 million children in the Philippines alone being designated as disabled. These findings highlight the importance of examining how successfully inclusive education supports these students' learning.

According to Byrd and Alexander (2020), the duty for educating Learners with Special Education Needs (LSEN) has migrated beyond special education (SPED) instructors, emphasizing the value of inclusive education. Mainstreaming, at which point LSEN are organized into general knowledge studies classrooms accompanying support, is viewed as ultimate direct knowledge scene under the Least Restrictive scene (LRE) law defined in the Individuals accompanying Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). This method tries to design a more cooperative knowledge atmosphere, specifically for LSEN.

The popularity of all-embracing instruction has raised dramatically over period. In the United States. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in addition 60% of scholars accompanying restrictions immediately give at least 80% of their best time of life in these backgrounds. Research suggests that this strategy serves all students by providing adequate instruction and fostering a culture of diversity and justice. In addition to providing a meaningful learning experience for two juniors with and without disabilities, teachers play a crucial role in making sure that juniors with disadvantages receive the support they need to succeed in this environment (School of Education Online, 2020).

According to the National Association of Special Education Teachers (n.d.), pupils accompanying distinctive instructional needs are popular to struggle academically, especially in language, reading, arithmetic, and writing. According to their study, these students' learning rate is slower than that of their peers, indicating a discrepancy between their skills and actual academic performance. Reading issues are the most frequent, impacting up to 90% of kids, and stem from a lack of language abilities such as phonological awareness. Math challenges are common, with pupils suffering with both calculations and reasoning. In addition, they struggle with handwriting, composition, spelling, and communication. Language barriers limit their capacity to communicate effectively and engage in educational settings. These intellectual and language deficiencies typically persist throughout a child's education, necessitating tailored assistance and interventions.

In the Philippines, the government emphasizes and supports education as a core human right, in line to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1987 Constitution. The Department of Education encourages inclusive education through mainstreaming. The Lorenzita (2023) study conducted in Legazpi City found that practices like Sign Language unification, Project LCD-FILE for common learning, and communication contextualization aided in fostering social integration, skill development, and increased job prospects, admitting LSEN to thrive in an all-encompassing instructional environment.

Aqilah et al. (2019) concluded that teachers must use a variety of specialized tactics to address both their strengths and weaknesses. They emphasize using art, music, and technology to engage and support learning. Interventions should also address the pupils' social and emotional needs, ensuring a comprehensive approach to their development. Educators can organize a learning atmosphere that advances both academic efficiency and personal progress by joining correction accompanying recognition of scholars' capabilities.

However, there are varying arguments on the actual effectiveness of inclusive education particularly for LSEN. Some research advocates for inclusive instruction as a supplying of equal and fair approach to instruction for all. However, other studies raise concerns about how well the inclusive education work in practice. For instance, Mc Coy et al. (2020) found that SEN learners often struggle when mainstreamed from primary to secondary schools, suggesting the weakness of the program in fully supporting their needs.

Similarly, Saloviita (2020) and Vaz et al. (2015) found that instructors' views toward inclusion varied depending on a variety of circumstances, particularly their willingness to address this need. Teacher preparation and eagerness can have an effect the fame of inclusive instruction. Likewise, based on observation, the researcher found that some teachers lack training and seminars on handling LSEN. Aside from that, lack of appropriate academic materials and available resources limits teachers in creating a suited environment for mainstreamed SLEN. These findings prove that there is still much to learn about when and how mainstreaming can be most effective when dealing with SEN learners.

Furthermore, it endures contribute to that there is a scarcity of research professed the efficacy concerning this procedure's exercise, especially for LSEN in the Philippines. While some studies emphasize the potential benefits of inclusive education, little have been conducted locally with evidence-based insights into how mainstreaming practices are perceived by teacher implementers in the Philippines.

This study will look into how LSEN instructors perceive the effectiveness of mainstreaming these kids in an inclusive context. Given the shortage of research in this place field, specifically in the Philippine framework, this study aims to support direct outlooks from instructors at the prominence of exercise. Understanding their perspectives, challenges, and coping techniques will help this study acquire a better understanding of what makes inclusive education successful and where it can be improved.

The effects concerning this study will contribute to the ongoing controversy concerning all-embracing instruction, particularly in cultivating countries with its own government such as the Philippines. (Schwartz et.al., 2021; Koçdar et. Al 2024), have proved the benefits of specialized interferences for SEN graduates but also accept the challenges of mixing these students into prevailing classrooms. Through presenting research-backed perspectives on the way teachers perceive and apply mainstreaming practices, the research will offer important suggestions for enhancing inclusive education in the Philippines.

Methodology

The study used phenomenology qualitative research to investigate teachers' perspective and individual experience of inclusive education and classroom management in managing LSEns at Marigondon Elementary School in Lapu-Lapu City Division in order to achieve the goals and purposes of this paper. The approach will entail interviewing selected teacher's one-on-one to gain thorough valuable research. A set of leading questions will be used to gather information, which will then be subjected to a thematic analysis.

Based on Neubauer et al. (2019) define phenomenology as one of qualitative research methodology that explores people's lived experiences in the world. It supports Husserl's (1931) theory that people derive meaning from the world by drawing on their own experiences. Alhazmi & Kaufman (2022) emphasized the necessity of thoroughly annotating, clarifying, describing, or interpreting people's lived experiences in order to disclose them more fully. The authors also explained that phenomenology can be descriptive, which goes beyond description by describing lived events without interpreting or understanding them. Instead, then depending on preset techniques, both strategies promote active participant engagement, enabling researchers to more responsively examine human experiences.

The research covered Marigondon Elementary School in Lapu-Lapu City Division, the main subject of the research goal within 2024–2025 academic year. On the island of Mactan, under the supervision of Department of Education and the Division of Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu, oversee implementing the inclusive education classroom setup.

The respondents of the study were the LSEN teachers in Marigondon Elementary school. Total 20 population sampling was utilized in this study since; there were few scopes of number of participants in the school. As argued by Laerd Dissertation (2024), this sampling technique is a purposive sampling method where researcher examined an entire population that shares specific, often uncommon, characteristics.

The researcher utilized the Thematic Analysis developed by Clark and Braun (2006) to examine the gathered qualitative data. According to Maguire and Delahunt (2017), it consists of six steps: (1) familiarizing oneself with the data; (2) creating preliminary codes; (3) searching for themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining themes; and (6) writing up.

Results and Discussion

The information acquired through interviews and observations is presented in this section. The study used thematic analysis to understand the information gathered through coding after reaching data saturation.

Five themes were generated from the transcripts of interviews with 12 sub-themes for the first environment. These themes are Handling Classroom Dynamics in an Inclusive Setting, Approaches in Managing Inclusive Classrooms, Strategies to Manage Behavioral Challenges in Inclusive Settings, Crafting a Helpful and Supportive Classroom Environment, and Embracing and Adapting Classroom Management Strategies to Accommodate SEN Learners.

Theme 1: Handling Classroom Dynamics in an Inclusive Setting

A shifting educational environment and hierarchy may conflict with SNED (McCoy et al., 2020). Compared to their counterparts without special educational requirements, those with accepted knowledge and intellectual disabilities were three times more likely to struggle. Therefore, it is crucial for lecturers to oversee classrooms that cater to these students' needs.

This theme talks about the methods teachers use to establish and maintain a peaceful, productive classroom that meets the various needs of every student. Teachers can play the role of encouraging both individual and group growth in the classroom by creating a disciplined and welcoming environment. The theme is divided into three sub-themes that showcase specific approaches: Establishing clear rules and routines and incorporating technology and designing engaging activities.

Sub theme1: Establishing Clear Rules and Routines.

This theme presents the importance of creating and implementing structured rules and routines in the classroom. The responses from the participants collectively point out that clarity, consistency, and structured routines in managing classrooms with mainstreamed LSEN play important role in this kind of scenario. They recognize that when there is clear expectations, rules, and directions in creating secure and all-encompassing learning surroundings.

"I also ensure that classroom routines are predictable and clear, providing visual schedules for students who may have difficulty with transitions. In doing so, I construct an environment place all scholars feel valued and fit playing, which is essential for a productive and inclusive classroom." – ETS

"I usually control the dynamics by setting clear expectations. I provide unambiguous guidelines and classroom procedures that support a secure and welcoming learning environment." – MES

"In an inclusive classroom, I usually control the dynamics by setting clear expectations. I provide unambiguous guidelines and classroom procedures that support a secure and welcoming learning environment." – AI-AI

Sub theme 2: Integrating Technology and Designing Interactive Activities. This theme deals with using technology and innovative tools to accommodate varying learning levels of diverse learners. It contains plotting differentiated ventures adapted to the level of the learners, particularly those accompanying special needs.

"Additionally, I incorporate technology into my lessons by using interactive whiteboards or educational applications that pique my students' interest." – AiAi

Theme 2: Approaches in Managing Inclusive Classrooms

According to Santa-Cruz and Rosas (2020), inclusive education is regarded as a moral principle that guarantees children with disabilities fair access to high-quality education. Regardless of a pupils individual needs, the program seeks to give them equal access to educational opportunities. Effective classroom management creates a safe and encouraging atmosphere. Using well-considered and efficient management techniques will foster social-emotional growth and improve academic results. This theme presents the strategies that teachers utilize in managing inclusive classrooms. It has three sub-themes: encouraging engagement through positive reinforcement, establishing clear routines, and peer support.

Teachers play important roles in managing inclusive classrooms. Effective management strategies are equally important for equitable learning opportunities be achieved. Even in a mainstreamed classroom, teachers can foster a well and conducive learning environment by putting these strategies into practice.

Sub-theme 1. Encouraging Engagement Through Positive Reinforcement.

This sub-theme is important in the management of inclusive classrooms. Accordingly, teachers who actively encourage engagement using positive reinforcement motivate students and create a supportive classroom environment. Likewise, rewarding positive behaviors, teachers can enhance students' self-esteem and foster a sense of accomplishment. This method guarantees that each student feels appreciated and recognized for their work in addition to assisting in maintaining focus and involvement.

"Another strategy I find particularly successful is positive reinforcement. Recognizing and rewarding small successes helps build self-esteem and encourages students to remain engaged. For instance I employ a token system in which kids receive tokens for acting in a constructive manner (like raising their hand, staying on task, or completing assignments). They can exchange tokens for preferred activities or privileges, which motivates them to participate and stay focused. For students with more significant needs, I adapt this strategy by offering immediate and more frequent praise for even small steps, helping them feel recognized and supported." – ETS

"I used a simple reward system where students earn stars or points for staying focused, which they can exchange for small advantages (like playing a game)." – EWA

Sub theme 2: Establishing Predictable Routines and Support.

This sub-theme emphasizes on providing structured strategies in establishing a well-organized and nurturing learning environment. Accordingly, a structured approach helps LSEN adapt more easily to routines and expectations.

"When managing a classroom to SEN pupils, Strategies that encourage structure, reinforcement, and tailored support must be put into practice. Using clear, consistent routines and expectations is one of the best classroom management techniques I've come across. Many SEN learners, especially those with autism or ADHD, survive in a surrounding where they know what to expect. For example, I establish daily schedules and use visual aids (like picture charts or timers) to help students with transitioning between activities. This reduces anxiety and helps them feel secure, which is crucial for their engagement and behavior." -ETS

The account of ETS mentions the importance of promoting structure and positive reinforcement in the classroom. The strategies used include establishing daily schedules and visual aids. According to the author, it helps students transition in between activities.

"These techniques, along with adaptability and patience, can give my SEN kids a more concentrated and encouraging learning environment. I will pair my SEN pupils with supportive and understanding peers to assist them maintain concentration." MES

Sub- theme 3: Peer Support. This sub-theme presents the contribution of having the buddy system in the classroom, where the regular learners are partnered with LSEN.

"These techniques, along with adaptability and patience, can give my SEN kids a more focused and encouraging learning environment. As my support system, to help my LSEN students stay focused, I will match them with understanding and encouraging peers." -CBA

"I also assigned a study buddy for him, which I think is also effective. Now, he listens to that study buddy especially if there are time that I cannot tend to him at longer times since I also must look after his other classmates. In that way, he imitates what his study buddy is doing like writing activities, answering tasks, simple chores like sweeping, wearing his own foot mop, wiping the floor if his bottle slip and the like." – LENRA

Theme 3: Strategies to Managing Behavioral Challenges in Inclusive Settings

In an inclusive classroom, teachers find it challenging to manage challenging behaviors (Aas et al., 2024), with some teachers holding negative attitudes toward their inclusion in regular classes. Their behavior is perceived as disruptive to classmates, which may cause stress and frustration to some teachers. This theme deals with the ways and approaches those teachers in Marigondon Elementary School did to properly address the challenging behavior of LSEN in their school. These approaches include addressing the root cause, collaborating with parents, and creating an inclusive and structured classroom environment.

Sub theme 1: Collaboration and Communication for Consistent Support

Communicating with parents from time to time is also a strategy that teachers use in managing the behavioral challenges in the classroom.

"Well, what I do first is to stay calm and look for some of the reasons for the change of behavior. Giving feedback to his parents about his attitude, and class performance every day helps since there is an open line of communication with parents where we can talk about possible reasons of change of behavior and together, we solve things out. Some things or reasons we have talked about are his snacks (avoiding him to eat sweets during snacks time, his class schedule like not skipping classes to not to break his routine, teaching him to walk from the gate to the classroom all by himself and the like)." – LENRA

"Giving his parents daily feedback on his conduct in class and attitude helps because it keeps the lines of communication open. Together, we can discuss the causes of the behavior change and find solutions." – MES

Sub theme 2: Creating an Inclusive and Structured Classroom Environment

Every kid, regardless of background or learning ability, is treated equally and with respect in an inclusive educational environment. It ensures that each learner has access to educational content for them to participate in their own learning (Learning Journals, 2021). By combining inclusivity with structure, All pupils are given equal opportunities to participate in class activities by their professors. A structured classroom with well-defined and regular procedures enables kids with special education needs feel less uncertain and more included.

"To make sure that every student, regardless of their needs, is aware of what is expected of them throughout the day, I begin by creating routines and expectations that are accessible to all kids, including those with special education needs, and that are clear and consistent. To do this, I use visual schedules, straightforward language, and unambiguous instructions. For all students to succeed—especially those with LSEN who might find changes or uncertainty difficult—these structures lessen anxiety and promote a sense of comfort." – MOI

"Addressing behavioral challenges from SEN learners in an inclusive setting requires a proactive, individualized approach. One strategy Since many SEN students, particularly those with autism or ADHD, feel more confident when they know what to expect, I always employ the strategy of providing a controlled and predictable atmosphere." – ETS

Sub theme 3: Group Engagement.

This sub-theme centers on the strategy of group activities and peer collaborations in minimizing classroom behavioral challenges. Group engagement can provide students with opportunities to interact, support one another, and learn essential social skills. Two participants highlighted these interventions.

"The learner gained confidence in participating in group activities and learnt how to use calming strategies independently. As breathing exercises, my students' peers also became more sympathetic and understanding." – EWA

"The learner felt more at ease and learned how to utilize soothing techniques on their own by taking part in group activities. Peers of my students also developed greater empathy and understanding as a result of the breathing exercises." – CBA

Theme 4: Crafting Helpful and Supportive Classroom Environment.

This idea climaxes the approaches teachers engage to establish a classroom atmosphere place all learners feel supported, treasured, and heartened. In addition to academic learning, a supportive environment encompasses behavioral, social, and emotional elements that are critical to students' entire growth. The theme includes two sub-themes: fostering empathy and respect and enhancing student interaction and collaboration.

Sub theme 1: Fostering Empathy and Respect.

Empathy is understanding other person's experiences by putting oneself in their shoe (Lesley University, 2025). It is also considered as a key ingredient of a successful relationship. Inside the classroom, empathy allows the teachers and students to understand and respond to the behavior of learners.

"To make sure that my Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN) feel supported and included in a general classroom, it requires careful planning and implementation of inclusive practices, such as fostering students' understanding and respect by incorporating activities and lessons on diversity and empathy. I will facilitate discussions and activities that emphasize understanding, respecting, and valuing individual uniqueness. Spend time learning about each student's interests, challenges, and skills to show that you regard them." -EWA

"I set the tone by modeling and reinforcing respectful behavior through everyday interactions, using resources and activities that reflect the cultural, language, and learning diversity of the students, and cultivating inclusivity and respect to create a supportive classroom atmosphere." - MES

"What I do really appreciate with the type of my learners is their openness and embracing each and everyone of them with no discrimination at all. In the first few months in class, I always told them that all of them are equal in the classroom and that they should support and respect one another." - LENRA

Sub- theme 2: Enhancing Student Interaction and Collaboration.

Another way of building a nurturing environment is through enhancing student interaction and collaboration in different classroom tasks. It encourages students to engage actively with one another, exchange ideas, and learn from different perspectives. This theme presents the value of empowering learners to choose their partners in different classroom tasks.

"During group activity, I always let them mingle with one another and allow them to work together. During duo dialogue activity, I allow them to explore and choose their own partner and give them classroom practice together. Basically, just allowing them to mingle with another in class, that way they can experience and communicate." - LENRA

Theme 5: Embracing and Adapting Classroom Management Strategies to Accommodate SEN Learners

This theme focuses to prepare teachers to meet the special demands of LSEN, this theme focuses on managerial strategies and instructional approaches. It highlights how teachers adjust and adapt their tactics to establish a welcoming and encouraging learning atmosphere for everybody. This theme generated three sub-themes: strengthening school and home collaboration, and tailored strategies.

Teachers can foster empathy and respect to all students by planning and integrating activities that promote understanding, modeling respectful behavior among students regardless of their abilities. Promoting pupils' interactions and collaboration allows them to build belongingness and encourage them to learn from each other. A personalized approach can be done to address the unique needs of everyone.

Sub- theme 1: Strengthening School and Home Collaboration.

It's essential to actively involve parents in their children's education. When there is a strong connection between teachers and parents, learning and behavior will be reinforced and addressed properly. It will also foster understanding between the two important institutions. This sub-theme investigates how parent-teacher collaboration and communication might improve students' educational experiences.

"Regular communication with parents promotes positive behaviors and approaches and ensures consistency between the home and the school." - ABA

Sub-theme 2: Tailored Strategies.

This approach is centered on teaching strategies crafted to meet individual student needs. Personalization focuses on adapting lessons and interventions to align with the learners' abilities, interests, and challenges for a meaningful engagement. This approach empowers students by addressing their unique needs and fostering growth.

"In addition, differentiated expectations are key. Each SEN learner has unique strengths and challenges, so I tailor my management plans to meet their distinguishing needs. For example, a student with dyslexia may need extra time to complete assignments, while a student with ADHD may need frequent breaks to maintain focus. By adjusting expectations based on their individual needs, I ensure that every student can succeed without feeling overwhelmed or discouraged. To learn successful tactics for every youngster, I collaborate closely to parents and inclusive personnel and exactly adjust my approach established their progress. Finally, creating a calm and supportive environment is essential. For students who might get overstimulated, I employ sensory aids like noise-canceling headphones or fidget toys, helping them self-regulate and stay focused. I also create a quiet space where students can go if they need a break, ensuring they have an outlet for managing emotions before returning to the lesson. By usually utilizing these strategies and regulating ruling class established the individual needs of my SEN learners, I can create an all-encompassing, organized, and auxiliary classroom place all undergraduates are more inclined thrive." – ETS

"To bring abstract ideas to life, I employ practical resources like counters, flashcards, or puzzles to declare the needs of diverse learners."

Conclusion

In conclusion, this investigation reveals the significance of active plans in meeting the singular needs of learners in an all-embracing homeroom. The findings show that creating a supportive environment, adapting teaching methods, and maintaining open lines of communication with parents are elements in helping LSEN feel valued and respected. Furthermore, individualized teaching approaches and rewards enhanced their motivation and encouraging positive behavior. Working closely with parents and using flexible strategies, assistants can increase the overall learning happening for various learners.

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Conflict of Interests

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