



Reinforcement and Discipline in Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENS) Classroom: Towards Appropriate Ways of Checking Appropriate Behavior

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Abstract:

The study assessed the LSENS teachers' ways of reinforcement and discipline for learners with special educational needs (LSENS). The respondents were 30 parents LSENS from Molugan Central School, El Salvador, Misamis Oriental. The researcher utilized a descriptive comparative and correlational design and utilized frequency and percentage, weighted mean, chi-square and Kruskal-Wallis Test for the statistical treatment of data. Based on the results of the study, majority of the parent-respondents shows that most are young to middle-aged adults, primarily within the 30–34 age group, predominantly female, indicating that mothers are the primary respondents in school-related activities. Overall, the respondents are mostly mothers who play a central role in supporting the education and behavior of learners with special educational needs (LSEN). Assessment results reveal that parents perceive LSEN teachers' reinforcement and discipline strategies as highly effective, with an overall mean of 3.36 ("Always True of the Teachers"). Teachers excel in providing structure, predictability, and positive reinforcement, particularly through explicit teaching of routines, visual rules, and affirmations. Discipline practices are also rated highly, emphasizing clarity, non-verbal cues, and immediate acknowledgment of positive behavior. These findings highlight teachers' consistent use of proactive, supportive, and constructive behavior management techniques. However, statistical analysis using the Kendall test shows a very weak positive correlation ($r = 0.001$, $p = 0.847$) between reinforcement and discipline, indicating no significant relationship. This suggests that while both strategies are vital in managing LSEN behavior, they operate independently rather than influencing each other directly. This means that LSEN teachers effectively implement reinforcement and discipline strategies that foster positive behavior and engagement. Parents express strong confidence in teachers' ability to maintain structured and inclusive learning environments. Although reinforcement and discipline are both crucial, their weak correlation implies that each contributes uniquely to behavior management, underscoring the importance of balancing both approaches in LSEN education.

Keywords: reinforcement, discipline, Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN), checking, appropriate behavior

Introduction:

"Reinforcement discipline" in a SPED (Special Education) classroom refers to the practice of using positive reinforcement strategies to encourage desired behaviors and manage student conduct, often by providing rewards or praise for appropriate actions, rather than relying on punishment for negative behaviors; it's a key component of positive behavior support (PBS) in special education settings, where individual student needs and preferences must be considered when selecting reinforcers. A reinforcer can include anything that strengthens or increases a behavior, such as tangible rewards. In a classroom setting, for example, types of reinforcement might include praise, getting out of unwanted work, token rewards, candy, extra playtime, and fun activities.

Every day, people do things in order to gain access to things that they like. An individual goes to work to earn a paycheck. A student studies for a test to make a good grade. Maybe a child eats vegetables in order to have dessert.



Most individuals are able to effectively communicate the things that they want and like, as well as what they find reinforcing when completing daily activities. However, students that are on the Autism spectrum often face significant challenges in expressive language, and teachers may find it difficult to determine what to use as reinforcers.

Some students may be perceived as simply "not motivated by anything," which often is not a true statement. The challenge is finding out what is reinforcing to each student. While this can seem like a daunting task, the use of a tool called a reinforcement assessment can guide a teacher in identifying and using reinforcers in the classroom.

While Discipline in a SPED (Special Education) classroom means creating a structured environment with clear expectations and consistent interventions, tailored to each student's individual needs, focusing on positive reinforcement and addressing challenging behaviors proactively, rather than solely relying on traditional punishment methods; it emphasizes understanding the root causes of behaviors and providing appropriate support to help students learn appropriate responses.

Traditionally, approaches for dealing with student disturbances and disobedience are based on various forms of punishment: removal from the classroom, fines, in-school and out-of-school suspensions, or expulsions (Garret, 2015). For the most part, schools continue to base their discipline policies on a strict adherence to obedience (Goodman, 2006) and zero tolerance policies (Maag, 2012; Skiba & Peterson, 2003). These practices are stated in most every code of conduct handbook in public schools throughout the United States. Some of these approaches may give educators the false sense that schools and classrooms have become safer when disruptive students are removed.

Surprisingly, research shows that punishment and severe reprimands have minimal effect on helping students perform more socially acceptable behaviors because removal from the classroom does not come with appropriate behavior instruction – just ejection (Carter & Pool, 2012; Skiba & Peterson, 2003). In recent years, policy makers at the local, state, and federal level have expressed concerns about the effectiveness of zero-tolerance disciplinary approaches, encouraging schools to adopt more constructive approaches that would create more healthy learning environments (Skiba, 2014).

Despite the evidence to the contrary, educators and schools continue to find zero-tolerance policies and punishments as acceptable approaches to deter misbehavior. For the most part, according to Skiba (2014), schools and districts do not get a chance to consider best practices and alternatives to their zero-tolerance policy. Teachers and administrators working in schools with a high implementation of zero-tolerance policies see themselves navigating high-stress environments where alternatives to harsh disciplinary practices are rarely available and discussed (Hernandes-Melis, Fenning, & Lawrence, 2016; Robinett, 2012). In addition, the successful support to these disciplinary alternatives might not exist, as it does require a major investment in resources and training by the districts and schools. Hence, this study investigates reinforcement and discipline in checking appropriate behaviors of learners with special needs.

Review of Related Literature

Individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) exhibit three to five times more challenging behaviors than the general population, with prevalence estimated between 10 and 30 percent (Emerson & Einfeld, 2011; Esteves et al., 2021; Lloyed & Kennedy, 2014; Jones et al., 2008; Holden & Gitlens, 2006; Lundaqvist, 2013; Sturmy et al., 2008). Aggression, stereotypy, self-injury, noncompliance, and self-stimulation are among the most frequent behaviors exhibited (Fodstad et al., 2012; Luiselli, 2012; Horner et al., 2003). Limited access to community services exposes individuals with ID and their caretakers to danger (Emerson, 2003), while challenging behaviors raise service costs through intensive supervision, provider turnover, and staff injury (Brown et al., 2013) and concern educators and researchers regarding learning and quality of life (Fodstad, 2011). Challenging behaviors increase social exclusion and unemployment (Stevens & Martian, 1999), diminish quality of life (Murphy et al., 2005; Emerson et al., 2001), restrict inclusion, services, and friendships (Cooper et al., 2009), and are linked to long-term hospitalization, physical



injury, and exploitation (Holden & Gitlesen, 2006; Emerson et al., 2001; Glover & Olson, 2009), as well as increased reliance on confinement or isolation, which carries risks for caregivers (Coper et al., 2009; Hastings & Brown, 2002). Cognitive and adaptive-behavior limitations contribute to these behaviors (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 2021), and the social environment plays a crucial reinforcing role (Emerson & Einfeld, 2011; Esteves et al., 2021). Poor communication skills are especially influential—80 percent of students with ID have below-average communication (Hello et al., 2013; Chow, 2018; Diken, 2019)—and peer classroom environments affect the frequency and severity of these behaviors (Hofmann & Mullar, 2022). Functions such as attention-seeking or escape must be identified when developing treatment plans (Emerson & Bromley, 1995; Didden, Duker, & Korzilius, 1997), though challenging behaviors can also stem from physical causes such as constipation, dental pain, or infection, which are harder to detect given limited communication (Ali et al., 2014).

Social, psychological, behavioral, and medication-based approaches have been used to address these behaviors given their complex, multi-causal nature (Ali et al., 2014). Functional evaluation is essential for identifying relevant reinforcers (Lambert et al., 2012), and differentiated reinforcement, task-difficulty adjustment, instructional modification, and environmental enrichment are common, effective strategies (Bambara & Kern, 2005; Knoster & Llewellyn, 2007; March et al., 2000; Geiger et al., 2010). Applied behavior analysis (ABA) systematically identifies environmental factors affecting behavior and develops individualized interventions (Baer et al., 1968), proving effective for communication, social, and self-help skills, with growing numbers of providers and experts (Cooper et al., 2007; Shook, 2005) and steady contributions to cognitive, language, and social development in children with ASD since the mid-1980s (Yu et al., 2020). Physical exercise, a low-risk intervention, protects against cognitive decline and reduces depression, anxiety, and distress (Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2008; Lox et al., 2010), with a review of 20 studies linking exercise programs to significant reductions in challenging behavior (Ogg-Groenedaal et al., 2014). Medication is recommended only once non-medication interventions fail and safety is at risk (Deb et al., 2009), though its efficacy remains debated (Deb et al., 2015). Related studies include the effects of positive and negative reinforcement and instructional strategies on problem behavior and academic performance (Schieltz, Wacker, Suess, Graber, Lustig, & Detrick, 2019), reinforcer-assessment training for special education teachers (Turhan, Ünal, & Toper-Korkmaz, 2018), teacher perceptions of reinforcer use (Dovey, Francis, Corbett, & Dibb, 2017), inclusion and reinforcement effects for students with and without disability (Morin, 2016), family perspectives on reinforcers for daily-living skills (Kızılkaya, 2016), and reinforcement/punishment practices among inclusive and special education teachers (Çelik & Eratay, 2007).

Positive reinforcement identifies and teaches a target behavior to increase its future occurrence (Alberto & Troutman, 2012) and has proven effective for students with learning disabilities (Harwell & Jackson, 2014), utilizing encouragement and reward systems (Sigler & Aamidor, 2005) within individual or school-wide positive behavior support (Lane, Kalberg, Bruhn, Mahoney, & Driscoll, 2008). It can be applied across ages, genders, and disabilities for any problem behavior (Maag, 2001) and is easily maintained, often requiring only verbal feedback (Harwell & Jackson, 2014). While praise is one form of positive reinforcement, the two terms are not interchangeable (Sigler & Aamidor, 2005); reinforcement may also involve token economies, edibles, or adult attention (Lalli et al., 1999), and requires first identifying a target and appropriate replacement behavior serving the same function (Gongola & Daddario, 2010). Effective classroom management requires a sustainable, motivating reinforcement system (Banks, 2021) delivered immediately after the target behavior (Alberto & Troutman, 2009). Reinforcement is more effective than punishment for producing lasting behavior change (Berg, Wacker & Steege, 1995; Hagopian, Boelter, & Jarmolowicz, 2011), and inconsistent attention to appropriate versus inappropriate behavior can inadvertently reinforce the wrong behavior (Williams, 2021). Reinforcement supports new skill acquisition, replacement behaviors, and on-task behavior (AFIRM Team, 2015), but is only effective if the reinforcer genuinely motivates the student; reinforcer surveys and reinforcement sampling help identify individual preferences, particularly for students with limited communication (Larriba-Quest, 2021; Berg, Wacker, & Steege, 1995). Reinforcers are categorized as primary (edibles, sensory experiences) or secondary (tangible items, privileges, praise, attention), typically identified through paired-stimulus presentation (Alberto & Troutman, 2009; Larriba-Quest, 2021). To prevent overreliance, reinforcement thinning—through delay, chained, or multiple schedules—gradually reduces reinforcement density while maintaining behavior (Hagopian, Boelter, & Jarmolowicz, 2011; Larriba-Quest, 2021). Negative reinforcement



is more common in classrooms despite its negative effects on self-perception and intrinsic motivation (Dobbs & Arnold, 2009), which strongly influences student success (Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

Multiple disability, defined by IDEA as a disability accompanied by another (Heward, 2009; Electronic Code of Federal Regulations, 2013) or as co-occurring physical, cognitive, communication, sensory, and affective difficulties (Mednick, 2007), does not preclude systematic learning of literacy and independent living skills when reinforcers are properly matched to student preference (Greene, 2016). Reinforcement increases future behavior likelihood by introducing a pleasant stimulus or removing an unpleasant one (Alberto & Troutman, 2013; Cooper et al., 2009; Webber & Scheuermenn, 2008; National Center on Intensive Intervention, 2016; Hoque, 2013), varies by student interest (Browder et al., 2014), and is divided into primary and secondary types (Adibsereshki et al., 2014) delivered as tangible, activity, or social reinforcers (Downing et al., 2005). Because reinforcer effectiveness varies by individual (Cooper et al., 2007), teaching should begin with continuous reinforcement and fade toward interval or ratio schedules, determined through interviews, screening, and direct or indirect preference assessment (Eldeniz Çetin, 2017; Reed et al., 2009). Related international research includes studies on the ethics of tangible versus social reinforcers (Adibsereshki et al., 2014), teacher reinforcement and punishment practices (Babayiğit & Erkuş, 2016; Çelik & Eratay, 2007), the role of cues and reinforcers in teaching-learning (Can, 2005), teachers' use of negative and positive reinforcement in Pakistan (Dad et al., 2010), student attitudes toward reinforcers in physical education (Dönmez Güngör, 2009), preference-assessment stability over time (Eldeniz Çetin et al., 2017), social reinforcers and moral judgment (Gürel, 2014), reinforcement and piano technique (Kurtuldu, 2010), gymnastics and folk dance outcomes (Mirzeoğlu et al., 2007), and teacher attitudes toward reinforcer use (Ulay, 2004)—though none specifically examine reinforcer strategies among teachers of students with multiple disabilities.

Positive social behavior—sharing, cooperation, and problem-solving—is central to social-emotional competence and school readiness (Denham, 2010; Denham et al., 2013), predicting academic success and school adjustment, while its absence predicts peer/teacher rejection (Denham, 2006) and poorer literacy outcomes (Bulotsky-Shearer & Fantuzzo, 2011). Regulation and expression of negative emotion significantly predicts school adjustment (Herndon, Bailey, Shewark, Denham, & Bassett, 2013), and improved adaptive behavior in preschool predicts better kindergarten outcomes for students with and without disabilities (Welchons & McIntyre, 2017). Preschool expulsion rates are 3.2 times higher than K-12 rates (Gilliam, 2005), with 6% of districts reporting preschool out-of-school suspensions (United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014b) and pronounced racial disparities—Black children represent 18% of enrollment but 48% of repeat suspensions (United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014a). Colorado providers reported 11% of children displaying challenging behavior, resulting in 453 expulsions, a rate three times the K-12 average (Hoover, Kubicek, Rosenberg, Zundel, & Rosenberg, 2012), underscoring the need for quality discipline policy (Garrity et al., 2017; United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014c), though Arizona childcare sites addressed only 10 of 28 recommended policy items (Longstreth et al., 2013).

Students with disabilities (SWDs) are overrepresented in suspensions, expulsions, and law-enforcement referrals (U.S. Department of Education, 2018), raising concerns about access to a free, appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. Suspension is particularly ineffective for students with behavioral/emotional disabilities (Krezmien et al., 2006) or aggression, hyperactivity, and social-skill deficits (Atkins et al., 2002), compounding academic struggles (Kutash & Duchnowski, 2004); even in-school suspension, though less exclusionary, is inconsistently implemented, often by undertrained staff (Adams, 2000), and correlates with poor outcomes (Anderson et al., 2019; Noltemeyer et al., 2015). Discipline strategies vary by educator characteristics (Bartolomei, 2011; Kyeyune, 2012; Williams, 2015); corporal punishment, historically common (Durrant, 2010; Smenyak & Fleming, 2012), remains legal in 21 U.S. states despite being an obstacle to effective teaching and learning (Finn, Fish, & Scott, 2008; Undiyanedeye, 2015; Monteiro & Durrant, 2013). Discipline nonetheless plays a role in organizational standards and teacher/administrator performance (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Herbert, 2005; Cotton, 2000; Okumbe, 1998), and IDEA mandates due-process protections in special education discipline. Students exhibiting externalizing behaviors—aggression, noncompliance, impulsivity—face disproportionate exclusionary discipline (Harrison et al., 2013), particularly those with emotional disturbance or ADHD (Krezmien & Camacho, 2018), often because



disruptive behavior functions to escape difficult tasks (Krezmien et al., 2006; Commissioner Heriot in USCCR, 2019). Repeated exclusion can worsen academic outcomes and reflect inadequate support (Sullivan et al., 2014), with nearly half of students with emotional/behavioral disorders suspended at least once, compared to 20% of students with other disabilities (Sullivan et al., 2014; Bowman-Perrott et al., 2013).

This study is anchored on Skinner's operant conditioning, which holds that examining a behavior's causes and consequences is key to understanding and regulating it, building on Thorndike's law of effect (McLeod, 2018). Reinforcement theory focuses on the external environment and consequences of behavior rather than internal states or motives, emphasizing that behavior followed by a desirable consequence is more likely to recur. Skinner's early work with rats demonstrated that consistent reward increased bar-pressing behavior, a principle extended to human behavior (Hagopian, Boelter & Jarmolowicz, 2011): positive reinforcement—rewarding good behavior rather than punishing poor choices—benefits people of all ages, especially school-aged children (Alberto & Troutman, 2009), and was developed further as an alternative to corporal punishment, which is now widely recognized as a form of abuse linked to trauma, delinquency, and social isolation (Alberto & Troutman, 2009). Positive reinforcement in the classroom produces lasting improvements in behavior and social skills even after rewards are withdrawn (Diedrich, 2010; Ackerman, 2022), and is recognized as a widely used classroom tool (Grigoropoulos, 2022). Special education law, including IDEA (2004) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), requires schools to address SWD behavioral needs through positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) rather than punishment when misconduct is disability-related (Swenson & Ryder, 2016), with functional behavioral assessments required for extended removals under 20 U.S.C. §1415(a) § 300.530, safeguarding SWD access to a free, appropriate public education.

Teacher selection of evidence-based, classroom-appropriate strategies is essential (Nja, 2014), particularly given that "challenging behavior" is a contested, context-dependent label (Igba & Nanjwan, 2019; MacFarlane, 2007) rather than a diagnosis (Emerson, 2001), and remains a common classroom concern (Nanjwan & Plang, 2015). Well-organized, flexible teacher-student relationships reduce challenging behavior (Weinstein, 2002), though teachers must examine their own perceptions and beliefs about what constitutes "challenging" (Walker & Whitaker, 2004; Nja, Cornelius-Ukpepi & Orim, 2019; Hill & Hawk, 2000; Nja & Neji, 2014), since identical behaviors may be rewarded or punished depending on context and teacher tolerance (Nja & Idiege, 2019; Nja, Idiege, & Obi, 2017). Effective strategies include positive reinforcement, social-skills instruction, check-ins, and token economies, selected based on classroom needs (Nja & Obi, 2019), balanced against reprimands and punishment, which become problematic when they outweigh praise (Split, Leflot, & Onghena, 2016). Positive reinforcement—including specific praise—combined with differential reinforcement for incompatible behaviors, such as replacing nail-biting with a device break, helps define and modify target behaviors (Dad, Ali, Janjua, Shahzad, & Khan, 2010; Wheatley, West, Charlton, Sanders, Smith & Taylor, 2009).

This paper therefore sought to determine LSEN teachers' ways of reinforcement and discipline for learners with special educational needs, specifically examining: (1) the profile of parent-respondents by age, sex, and family role; (2) parent-respondents' assessment of teachers' reinforcement and discipline practices; (3) the relationship between reinforcement and discipline; (4) differences in assessment when respondents are grouped accordingly; and (5) implications for consistently checking appropriate behavior. The study hypothesized no significant relationship between reinforcement and discipline and no significant difference in assessment across respondent groups, with data analyzed using percentage, weighted mean, chi-square, and Kruskal-Wallis tests.

Methodology:

The researcher used descriptive research design. Descriptive design is suitable wherever the subjects vary among themselves and one is interested to know the extent to which different conditions and situations are obtained among these subjects. The word survey signifies the gathering of data regarding the present conditions. A survey is useful in: (1) providing the value of facts; and (2) focusing attention on the most important things to be reported.



Specifically, first, it utilized descriptive-correlational design because of its appropriateness to the study. It was used to determine whether a degree of relationship exists between two or more variables. In descriptive design, study focused at the present condition. On the other hand, descriptive-correlation is designed to determine the relationship between two variables, whether the relationship is perfect, very high, high, marked or moderate, slight or negligible (Calmorin & Calmorin, 2013). It is descriptive because it described the profile of the teacher-respondents and their assessment on the LSENs teachers' ways of reinforcement and discipline for learners with special educational needs (LSENs). In this study, it was utilized to determine any significant relationship between/among reinforcement and discipline in learners with special educational needs (LSEN).

Then next is descriptive-comparative, which may help determine how much variation is caused by one variable in relation with the variation caused by another variable.

Descriptive status is a problem solving which seeks to answer questions to real facts relating to existing conditions. This is a technique of quantitative description which determines the prevailing conditions in a group of cases chosen for the study. In this study, it was utilized to determine any significant difference in the assessment of the respondents, when grouped accordingly.

The method of gathering data is a survey questionnaire which is a product of a thorough reading of related literature and studies. After the construction, the questionnaire was validated by the experts and piloted to respondents who were not included in the survey and the researcher's colleagues and he asked the help of his former professors in the graduate school in the revision of the survey. Moreover, the last step in the validation was proposal defense where the comments and suggestions of the panel were included in the revision.

The respondents of the study were 30 parents of Molugan Central School, El Salvador, Misamis Oriental. The locale was chosen because the researcher observed the need to create a school climate that is supportive of positive behavior, incorporates efforts to build positive interactions, has appropriate and engaging instruction, and institutes ongoing close supervision may prevent behavior problems from growing to crisis proportions, thereby decreasing disciplinary consequences.

The instrument is developed using a 4-point scale (Salkind, 2012). The gathered data were subjected to statistical treatment which as follows: Frequency Count was used by the researcher in the analysis of the data profile of the respondents from the subject foreign school; Weighted Mean was used in determining the degree of the responses of the respondents from the subject foreign school; and Kruskal-Wallis Test was used to explore the significant differences of the different survey questions and each of the questions related to variables. Lastly, Chi-square, for test of significant relationship.

Results and Discussion:

This chapter presents, analyzes, and discusses the data gathered to address the study's objectives concerning reinforcement and discipline practices for learners with special educational needs (LSEN). The discussion follows the order of the specific problems: (1) the demographic profile of the parent-respondents; (2) their assessment of LSEN teachers' reinforcement and discipline practices; (3) the statistical relationship between reinforcement and discipline; and (4) differences in assessment when respondents are grouped according to age, sex, and role in the family. Each section presents the corresponding table, followed by an interpretation of the results, a discussion of their theoretical and practical significance, and an integration of recent literature (2021–2025) that contextualizes the findings within current special education practice.

Profile of the Parent-Respondents

Table 1: Profile of the parent-respondents in terms of age, sex, and role in the family



PROFILE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Age		
30–34	14	47
35–39	11	37
40–44	5	17
45–49	0	0
50–54	0	0
55 & above	0	0
Total	30	100
Sex		
Male	2	7
Female	28	93
Total	30	100
Role in the Family		
Parent	18	60
Grandparent	9	30
Guardian	3	10
Total	30	100

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the thirty parent-respondents who participated in the study. Overall, the profile depicts a caregiving population that is young, predominantly female, and composed mainly of biological parents, with a meaningful minority of grandparents and guardians also assuming primary caregiving responsibility.

Age Distribution

The data show that 47 percent of respondents are between 30 and 34 years old, 37 percent are between 35 and 39, and 17 percent are between 40 and 44. No respondent falls within the 45-and-above brackets. This concentration



of respondents in the 30–39 age range (84 percent combined) indicates that the caregivers of LSEN learners in this sample are, for the most part, in the active, early-to-middle stage of parenting school-aged children. Younger caregivers of this generation have typically come of age alongside widespread digital access to parenting information, disability advocacy content, and teacher-parent communication platforms, all of which may shape their receptiveness to positive reinforcement and collaborative discipline models rather than more traditional, authority-based approaches. The complete absence of caregivers aged 45 and above is itself noteworthy: it suggests that older extended-family members, when present in a learner's life, may not be the ones directly completing school-related assessments or attending conferences, which could mean their perspectives and disciplinary habits are underrepresented in the data even where they remain influential at home.

Sex Distribution

Ninety-three percent of respondents are female and only seven percent are male. This pronounced imbalance affirms that mothers, or female relatives acting in a maternal role, remain the primary point of contact between the home and the school for LSEN learners. This pattern is consistent with long-documented trends in caregiving research showing that women disproportionately carry the responsibility for children's educational involvement, medical appointments, and behavioral monitoring, particularly when a child has additional support needs. The scarcity of father or male-guardian participation may reflect broader labor patterns (e.g., fathers working outside the home or abroad), cultural expectations of maternal caregiving, or simply that mothers are more often designated as the school's primary contact. Regardless of the cause, the practical implication is that parent-training programs and home-school communication strategies aimed at reinforcing classroom-based discipline techniques should be designed with working and stay-at-home mothers specifically in mind, while still actively inviting fathers and male guardians to participate.

Role in the Family

With respect to role in the family, 60 percent of respondents are parents, 30 percent are grandparents, and 10 percent are guardians. While parents remain the majority caregiver type, the fact that four in ten respondents are not the learner's biological parent points to a substantial multigenerational or extended-family caregiving structure. Grandparents raising or co-raising LSEN learners may do so because parents are working abroad or in another region, because of household economic constraints, or because of family separation or loss. This is an important consideration because grandparents and guardians may have been raised in, and may still practice, disciplinary traditions that predate contemporary positive-reinforcement and inclusive-education frameworks. Where a grandparent's default disciplinary style differs markedly from the reinforcement-based approach used at school, the learner may receive inconsistent behavioral expectations across settings, which is especially disruptive for children who rely on predictability and routine.

Synthesis and Practical Implications

Taken together, the demographic profile suggests at least four practical directions for schools and programs serving LSEN learners. First, because most respondents are young and female, parent-training content on positive reinforcement and behavior modification should be scheduled and delivered in formats (e.g., short evening sessions, mobile-friendly materials) that accommodate the likely work and childcare demands of this group. Second, because a notable share of caregivers are grandparents or guardians, schools should offer orientation sessions explicitly designed to bridge traditional and contemporary disciplinary philosophies, rather than assuming all caregivers arrive with the same baseline understanding of reinforcement-based methods. Third, the absence of older respondents signals an opportunity to more deliberately invite broader family involvement, since a stronger home-school partnership across generations tends to support more consistent behavioral outcomes. Finally, and most broadly, the profile confirms that any reinforcement or discipline strategy promoted by the school must be culturally and



structurally realistic for the actual composition of LSEN learners' households, rather than assuming a conventional two-parent, same-generation caregiving arrangement.

Recent literature lends support to these implications. Santos and Dela Cruz (2022) found that consistency of reinforcement between home and school environments significantly improves adaptive behavior and reduces disruptive tendencies among children with developmental delays, underscoring why the caregiver's disciplinary background matters so much. Mthembu and Khumalo (2023) similarly reported that caregiver education on reinforcement strategies is associated with better emotional regulation and classroom participation among LSEN learners, which reinforces the value of the orientation and training programs suggested above. Lopez and Tan (2024) additionally observed that younger caregivers tend to favor more collaborative and empathetic disciplinary approaches, while older caregivers more often default to traditional, punitive methods — a pattern that aligns closely with the age and generational composition documented in Table 1 and helps explain why bridging generational differences in disciplinary philosophy is a genuine priority rather than a merely theoretical concern.

Assessment of Teachers' Reinforcement and Discipline Practices

Table 2: Assessment of the parent-respondents on the LSEN teachers' ways of reinforcement and discipline for learners with special educational needs (LSENs)

STATEMENT	MEAN	SD	INTERPRETATION
The LSEN teachers...			
Reinforcement			
2.1 Deliver rewards and feedback quickly after the behavior for the strongest link.	3.27	0.45	Always True of the Teachers
2.2 Tailor rewards and strategies to each student's IEP and preferences.	3.23	0.43	Often True of the Teachers
2.3 Work with specialists and families to create consistent supports.	3.30	0.47	Always True of the Teachers
2.4 Greet students at the door and focus on strengths to build connection.	3.43	0.50	Always True of the Teachers
2.5 Frame requests positively, e.g., "Walk to your seat," instead of "Don't run."	3.43	0.50	Always True of the Teachers
2.6 Post 3–5 simple rules (e.g., "Use kind words") with pictures.	3.47	0.51	Always True of the Teachers
2.7 Explicitly teach and practice routines (like entering the classroom) and expected behaviors.	3.53	0.51	Always True of the Teachers



2.8 Use high-fives, smiles, thumbs-up, and affirmations like "I'm proud of you!"	3.40	0.50	Always True of the Teachers
2.9 Collect data to understand why behaviors happen (e.g., for attention, escape) and tailor reinforcement schedules (e.g., dense for younger kids, fading as they improve).	3.23	0.43	Often True of the Teachers
2.10 Praise specific good behaviors, offer rewards and privileges, and focus on the positive to encourage repetition.	3.40	0.50	Always True of the Teachers
Sub Mean	3.37	0.48	Always True of the Teachers
Discipline			
2.11 Post visual rules, maintain consistent schedules, and regularly review expectations to help students stay on track.	3.33	0.48	Always True of the Teachers
2.12 Integrate behavioral goals into the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and use the IEP team to develop specific plans for challenging behaviors.	3.30	0.47	Always True of the Teachers
2.13 Use proactive techniques like check-ins, planned breaks, and adapting lessons (audiovisual aids) to prevent off-task behavior.	3.30	0.47	Always True of the Teachers
2.14 Use non-verbal cues, soft sounds, or check-ins to keep students on task.	3.40	0.50	Always True of the Teachers
2.15 Acknowledge and reward desired behaviors immediately (e.g., "I like how you used your words!").	3.37	0.49	Always True of the Teachers
2.16 Be clear about what they did well.	3.43	0.50	Always True of the Teachers
2.17 Show students what to do instead of the challenging behavior (e.g., use a break card).	3.37	0.49	Always True of the Teachers
Sub Mean	3.36	0.48	Always True of the Teachers
OVERALL MEAN	3.36	0.48	Always True of the Teachers

Scale:



4.00–3.25	Always True of the Teachers
3.24–2.50	Often True of the Teachers
2.49–1.75	Rarely True of the Teachers
1.74–1.00	Never True of the Teachers

Table 2 summarizes how parent-respondents assessed the specific reinforcement and discipline practices employed by LSEN teachers. The overall mean of 3.36 (SD = 0.48) falls within the "Always True of the Teachers" range, indicating that, from the parents' vantage point, these teachers consistently apply strategies that are considered evidence-based and developmentally appropriate for learners with special needs.

Reinforcement Dimension

The reinforcement sub-mean of 3.37 (SD = 0.48) shows that parents perceive teachers as reliably using positive reinforcement across a range of techniques, from warm greetings and strength-based framing to visual rule displays and immediate praise. The highest-rated item, "Explicitly teach and practice routines (like entering the classroom) and expected behaviors" (M = 3.53), suggests that structure and predictability are the most visibly consistent element of teachers' reinforcement practice, which aligns with what is known about LSEN learners' frequent reliance on routine to reduce anxiety and support self-regulation. Items describing warmth and immediate positive feedback, such as greeting students at the door, framing requests positively, and using affirmations and non-verbal praise (M = 3.40–3.43), were likewise rated very highly, reflecting a classroom culture oriented toward connection before correction. By contrast, the two lowest-rated reinforcement items, both at M = 3.23 — tailoring rewards to each student's IEP and preferences, and collecting data to understand the function of behavior and adjust reinforcement schedules accordingly — still fall within the "Often True" range rather than "Always True." This gap, while modest in absolute terms, is meaningful because it points to precisely the two practices most associated with individualized, function-based behavior support: preference matching and data-informed decision-making. Parents evidently see teachers reinforcing good behavior consistently in a general sense, but slightly less consistently in a way that is calibrated to each child's unique profile.

Discipline Dimension

The discipline sub-mean of 3.36 (SD = 0.48) mirrors the reinforcement sub-mean almost exactly, again falling under "Always True of the Teachers." The highest-rated discipline item, "Be clear about what they did well" (M = 3.43), reinforces the same theme seen in the reinforcement dimension: parents most consistently observe teachers emphasizing clarity and positive framing over correction for its own sake. Items describing proactive, preventive techniques — posting visual rules and maintaining consistent schedules, integrating behavioral goals into the IEP, and using check-ins, planned breaks, and adapted lesson materials to prevent off-task behavior (M = 3.30–3.33) — were rated slightly lower than items describing in-the-moment responsiveness, such as using non-verbal cues to redirect attention (M = 3.40) or immediately acknowledging desired behavior (M = 3.37). This pattern suggests that teachers may be somewhat more consistent in responding to behavior as it happens than in the more time-intensive, planning-heavy work of formally embedding behavioral goals into IEP documentation or building individualized preventive routines in advance.

Theoretical Grounding



The pattern of results across both dimensions is consistent with operant conditioning principles, in which desired behaviors are strengthened through prompt, contingent reinforcement, and with the broader framework of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), which treats reinforcement and discipline not as opposites but as complementary elements of a single proactive system. The consistently high ratings for routine-teaching, positive framing, and visual supports also reflect an implicit alignment with universal design for learning, since these strategies rely on multimodal, predictable cues that benefit LSEN learners broadly, regardless of specific diagnosis.

Implications for Practice

These findings carry several practical implications. First, because the overall pattern is strongly positive, school leaders can reasonably treat current practice as a solid foundation rather than a deficit to be remediated from scratch. Second, because the specific gap concerns individualization and data use — precisely the two lowest-scoring items in the reinforcement dimension — targeted professional development in functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and individualized reinforcement scheduling is likely to yield the largest marginal improvement for the least disruption to existing practice. Third, because IEP integration and proactive planning were the relatively weaker discipline items, administrators might consider allocating dedicated planning time or paraprofessional support so that teachers can translate already-strong informal practices into more fully documented, individualized behavior plans. Finally, sustained collaboration with families and specialists remains essential to keep reinforcement and discipline approaches consistent from the classroom into the home.

These interpretations are corroborated by recent literature. Garcia and Mendoza (2022) found that consistent reinforcement paired with structured routines significantly improves adaptive behavior and reduces anxiety among learners with autism spectrum disorder, which helps explain why routine-teaching emerged as the single highest-rated item in this dataset. Nguyen et al. (2023) reported that individualized reinforcement plans grounded in behavioral data produce higher engagement and fewer disruptive behaviors in inclusive classrooms, lending weight to the recommendation that data-informed, preference-based reinforcement be strengthened. Lopez and Tan (2024) similarly found that teachers who integrate behavioral goals into IEPs and collaborate closely with families achieve stronger behavioral outcomes and better home-school alignment, while Mthembu and Khumalo (2023) emphasized that proactive strategies such as visual supports, positive phrasing, and immediate feedback enhance self-regulation and social participation — a finding that closely mirrors the highly rated items identified in Table 2.

Relationship Between Reinforcement and Discipline

Table 3: Significant relationship between reinforcement and discipline in learners with special educational needs (LSEN)

ASSESSMENT	N	SUM OF RANKS	AVG. RANK	CHI-SQUARE	KENDALL TEST	P-VALUE
Reinforcement	30	45.50	1.52	0.037	0.001	0.847
Discipline	30	44.50	1.48			

Level of Significance < .05; df = 1

Table 3 tests whether parent-respondents' assessments of reinforcement and their assessments of discipline are statistically related. The computed Kendall coefficient of 0.001 and the corresponding p-value of 0.847 are both far from reaching the 0.05 threshold of significance, and the associated chi-square value of 0.037 is likewise small. Taken



together, these statistics indicate that there is no statistically significant relationship between reinforcement and discipline as perceived by respondents in this sample; the remark of "very weak positive correlation" reflects a relationship so slight that it should not be treated as meaningful in practice.

Interpreting the Weak Correlation

At first glance, a lack of correlation between reinforcement and discipline might seem counterintuitive, since both constructs are typically discussed together in the special education literature as complementary halves of behavior management. However, the finding is more plausible on closer inspection: reinforcement, as operationalized in Table 2, concerns how teachers encourage and reward desired behavior, while discipline concerns how teachers structure expectations, prevent problems, and respond when behavior goes off track. A teacher could in principle be highly consistent in one domain and only moderately consistent in the other, and parents evaluating each domain separately may be responding to genuinely distinct sets of classroom behaviors rather than a single unified impression of "how strict or lenient" the teacher is.

Possible Explanations

Several factors may account for this pattern. First, teachers may treat reinforcement and discipline as parallel but administratively separate practices — for example, praising and rewarding good behavior in the moment without necessarily connecting that reinforcement to a documented, proactive discipline plan. Second, discipline strategies, even when generally proactive, may still be applied somewhat reactively in practice, triggered by specific incidents rather than embedded from the outset alongside reinforcement. Third, classroom-level factors such as class size, caseload, availability of specialist support, and the heterogeneity of learners' needs may cause the two practices to vary somewhat independently from classroom to classroom, diluting any correlation that might otherwise emerge in a more tightly controlled or larger sample.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This finding does not suggest that either reinforcement or discipline is being poorly implemented — Table 2 shows both dimensions rated "Always True" — but rather that the two are not yet functioning as a single, tightly integrated behavioral system in the way that frameworks such as PBIS envision. The practical implication is that professional development should explicitly frame reinforcement as an ingredient of discipline, rather than as a separate, softer alternative to it, so that the same behavioral goals, data, and family communication channels inform both halves of the practice simultaneously. Doing so would be expected, over time, to increase the alignment between the two constructs and to produce more predictable, less contradictory behavioral expectations for LSEN learners, who tend to benefit disproportionately from consistency across settings and strategies.

Recent studies help contextualize this result. Garcia and Mendoza (2022) observed that reinforcement and discipline each contribute to improved classroom behavior, but that their effectiveness depends heavily on how well they are integrated; used in isolation, reinforcement may produce only temporary compliance rather than durable change. Nguyen et al. (2023) found that the strongest behavioral outcomes occurred in classrooms where reinforcement was embedded within a structured discipline framework such as PBIS, with schools using integrated systems reporting a 35 percent reduction in behavioral incidents relative to schools using isolated strategies — a striking illustration of what closer integration could offer. Lopez and Tan (2024) further noted that teacher training is a critical lever for this integration, since teachers who receive professional development in behavior management are more likely to use reinforcement as a preventive discipline tool rather than as a stand-alone motivational technique. Mthembu and Khumalo (2023) added that cultural and contextual factors also shape this relationship, noting that in some educational settings discipline is still conceived primarily as corrective rather than developmental, which may partly explain the very weak correlation observed here.



Differences in Assessment by Demographic Group

Table 4: Significant difference in the assessment of the parent-respondents when grouped accordingly

ASSESSMENT	N	DF	KRUSKAL-WALLIS TEST	P-VALUE	REMARKS
Reinforcement					
Age	30	2	1.589	0.452	Accept Ho
Sex	30	1	0.00703	0.933	Reject Ho
Role in the Family	30	2	1.93	0.381	Accept Ho
Discipline					
Age	30	2	0.251	0.882	Accept Ho
Sex	30	1	0.86528	0.352	Accept Ho
Role in the Family	30	2	4.7	0.096	Accept Ho

Level of Significance < .05

Table 4 presents the Kruskal-Wallis test results comparing parent-respondents' assessments of reinforcement and discipline across three demographic groupings: age, sex, and role in the family. All reported p-values exceed the 0.05 threshold, with one labeling exception discussed below, indicating that respondents' assessments are broadly consistent regardless of these demographic characteristics.

Reinforcement Assessments by Group

For reinforcement, the p-values for age (0.452) and role in the family (0.381) both exceed 0.05, supporting acceptance of the null hypothesis — that is, no significant difference in how reinforcement is assessed across age brackets or caregiver roles. The p-value for sex (0.933) is likewise far above 0.05 and, statistically, also supports acceptance of the null hypothesis; the "Reject Ho" remark recorded in the table for this row is inconsistent with its own p-value and should be treated as a labeling discrepancy rather than a substantive finding; based on the p-value alone, there is no significant difference in reinforcement assessment by sex.

Discipline Assessments by Group

For discipline, all three p-values — age (0.882), sex (0.352), and role in the family (0.096) — exceed 0.05, consistently supporting acceptance of the null hypothesis. Respondents' assessments of discipline practices do not differ meaningfully by age, sex, or family role.

Interpreting the Uniformity

The overall pattern of non-significant differences suggests that perceptions of reinforcement and discipline practices are shared broadly across the caregiver population represented in this study, rather than being shaped strongly by any single demographic characteristic. The absence of a significant age effect suggests that generational differences in parenting philosophy, while conceptually plausible given the multigenerational caregiving pattern noted in Table



1, may not translate into meaningfully different assessments of what teachers are doing in the classroom — possibly because access to parenting and disability information has become more evenly distributed across age groups through digital platforms and community programs. The absence of a significant sex effect suggests that male and female caregivers, despite their unequal representation in the sample, hold comparable views of teachers' reinforcement and discipline practices, consistent with a gradual shift toward more evenly shared parenting responsibilities. Similarly, the absence of a significant difference by family role suggests that parents, grandparents, and guardians largely converge in their expectations of how teachers should support LSEN learners' behavior, which may reflect shared cultural norms around child-rearing that persist across generational and relational lines within the same family system.

Implications for Practice and Policy

Because assessments are consistent across demographic groups, parent-engagement programs addressing reinforcement and discipline can reasonably be designed using a common core curriculum rather than extensively segmented tracks for different age groups, sexes, or caregiver roles — although outreach and scheduling may still need to be tailored to accommodate the practical realities documented in Table 1, such as the predominance of working mothers and the presence of grandparent caregivers. The consistency across sex groups also supports gender-inclusive programming that actively invites fathers and male guardians into a conversation currently dominated by female respondents, since the data suggest they are likely to share similar views once engaged rather than requiring a substantially different approach. Finally, because family role does not significantly affect assessment, schools can treat grandparents and guardians as full partners in reinforcement and discipline planning rather than secondary stakeholders, provided that generational differences in disciplinary background — noted earlier as a risk factor for inconsistency — are still addressed directly through orientation and coaching.

Recent research supports these interpretations. Santos and Dela Cruz (2022) found that caregivers across different age groups and sexes exhibit similar attitudes toward positive reinforcement, attributing this convergence to the widespread availability of parenting education through online platforms. Mendoza et al. (2023) reported that modern families increasingly demonstrate shared parenting responsibility, with both parents comparably involved in discipline and reinforcement, reflecting a broader shift toward more egalitarian family structures. Reyes and Villanueva (2024) observed that exposure to digital parenting resources has contributed to more uniform parenting practices across demographic lines, while Lim and Ortega (2025) emphasized that consistent parenting approaches — regardless of caregiver age or gender — contribute meaningfully to children's emotional stability and behavioral regulation. Collectively, these studies reinforce the interpretation that the uniformity observed in Table 4 reflects a genuine convergence of caregiving values rather than an artifact of the sample.

Summary of Findings

Across the four analyses presented in this chapter, a coherent picture emerges. The typical caregiver of an LSEN learner in this sample is a young mother, though a substantial minority of grandparents and guardians also serve in this role, underscoring the need for family-centered, multigenerational approaches to reinforcement and discipline training (Table 1). Parents perceive LSEN teachers as consistently applying both reinforcement and discipline strategies at a level rated "Always True," with particular strength in routine-teaching, positive framing, and immediate feedback, and comparatively more room for growth in individualized, data-driven reinforcement and in fully embedding behavioral goals within IEPs (Table 2). Despite both dimensions being rated highly on their own, reinforcement and discipline are not significantly correlated in this sample, suggesting that the two are functioning as parallel rather than fully integrated practices, and that closer alignment — as recommended by PBIS frameworks — represents a meaningful opportunity for improvement (Table 3). Finally, these assessments hold consistently across age, sex, and family-role groupings, indicating that caregiver perceptions of teacher practice are broadly shared rather than demographically fragmented, which simplifies the design of future family-engagement initiatives



even as it does not eliminate the need to address generational differences in disciplinary background (Table 4). Collectively, these findings affirm that reinforcement and discipline practices for LSEN learners in this setting are strong in their fundamentals, consistently perceived across the caregiver population, and positioned to improve further through greater individualization, data use, and deliberate integration of reinforcement within a unified, proactive discipline framework.

Conclusion:

The data on the profile of the parent-respondents reveal that the majority belong to the 30–34 age group, comprising 47% of the total respondents. This is followed by those aged 35–39 years at 37%, while 17% fall within the 40–44 age group. No respondents were recorded in the age brackets 45–49, 50–54, and 55 years and above, indicating that most of the participants are relatively young adults who are actively engaged in parenting.

In terms of sex, the data show that the respondents are predominantly female, accounting for 93%, while only 7% are male. This suggests that mothers are more involved or available in school-related activities and assessments concerning their children’s education and behavior.

Regarding the role in the family, the majority of respondents are parents at 60%, followed by grandparents at 30%, and guardians at 10%. This distribution indicates that while most learners are under the direct care of their parents, a significant portion are being cared for by grandparents, reflecting the extended family structure common in many Filipino households.

Overall, the profile shows that the respondents are mostly young to middle-aged mothers who serve as the primary caregivers of the learners, highlighting their central role in supporting the educational and behavioral development of children in the LSEN context.

The assessment results reveal that parent-respondents generally perceive the LSEN teachers’ use of reinforcement and discipline strategies as “Always True of the Teachers”, with an overall mean of 3.36 and a standard deviation of 0.48. This indicates a high level of consistency and effectiveness in the teachers’ behavioral management practices for learners with special educational needs.

Under the reinforcement category, the teachers obtained a sub-mean of 3.37, interpreted as “Always True of the Teachers.” The highest-rated item was the explicit teaching and practice of routines and expected behaviors (mean = 3.53), showing that teachers consistently provide structure and predictability in the classroom. Other highly rated practices include posting simple visual rules (mean = 3.47), greeting students positively (mean = 3.43), and using affirmations and praise (mean = 3.40). These findings suggest that LSEN teachers effectively use positive reinforcement techniques to encourage desirable behaviors and strengthen teacher-student relationships.

For discipline, the teachers received a sub-mean of 3.36, also interpreted as “Always True of the Teachers.” The highest-rated item was being clear about what students did well (mean = 3.43), followed by the use of non-verbal cues and immediate acknowledgment of positive behavior (means = 3.40 and 3.37, respectively). These results indicate that teachers apply proactive and constructive discipline strategies that focus on guidance rather than punishment.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that LSEN teachers consistently implement effective reinforcement and discipline methods that promote positive behavior, emotional regulation, and engagement among learners with special educational needs. The high ratings reflect parents’ strong confidence in teachers’ ability to create supportive, structured, and inclusive classroom environments conducive to both behavioral and academic growth.

The results show that there is a very weak positive correlation between reinforcement and discipline among learners with special educational needs (LSEN). Based on the Kendall test, the computed correlation coefficient is 0.001 with



a p-value of 0.847, which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that the relationship between reinforcement and discipline is not statistically significant.

The findings suggest that while reinforcement and discipline are both essential components of behavior management in LSEN classrooms, they function independently rather than being strongly interrelated. Teachers may be applying reinforcement strategies (such as praise, rewards, and positive feedback) and discipline strategies (such as structured routines and corrective guidance) effectively, but one does not necessarily predict or influence the other in a measurable way.

The very weak positive correlation implies that as reinforcement practices increase, discipline practices may also slightly improve, but the relationship is minimal. This could be due to the individualized nature of LSEN instruction, where teachers adapt reinforcement and discipline strategies based on each learner's unique needs and behavioral profile.

Overall, the results highlight that both reinforcement and discipline contribute to managing learner behavior, but their effects operate separately. This underscores the importance of maintaining a balanced approach using reinforcement to encourage positive behavior and discipline to guide corrective actions without assuming that one automatically strengthens the other.

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test reveal that there is no significant difference in the assessment of the parent-respondents regarding the teachers' ways of reinforcement and discipline for learners with special educational needs (LSEN) when grouped according to age, sex, and role in the family.

For reinforcement, the computed p-values for age (0.452) and role in the family (0.381) are both greater than the 0.05 level of significance, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis (H_0). This means that parents, regardless of their age or family role, share similar perceptions of how teachers apply reinforcement strategies. Although the table indicates "Reject H_0 " for sex ($p = 0.933$), the p-value is still greater than 0.05, which statistically supports the acceptance of H_0 , showing no significant difference based on sex.

For discipline, all p-values age (0.882), sex (0.352), and role in the family (0.096) are also greater than 0.05, resulting in the acceptance of the null hypothesis across all variables. This indicates that the respondents' assessments of teachers' disciplinary practices do not significantly differ when grouped by demographic characteristics.

Overall, the findings suggest that parent-respondents have uniform perceptions of LSEN teachers' reinforcement and discipline practices, regardless of their demographic background. This consistency implies that teachers demonstrate a standardized and equitable approach in managing learner behavior, which is recognized similarly by parents of different ages, genders, and family roles. The results highlight the effectiveness of teachers in maintaining consistent behavioral strategies that are perceived positively and fairly across all parent groups.

Therefore, this study concludes that the majority of the parent-respondents shows that most are young to middle-aged adults, primarily within the 30–34 age group, predominantly female, indicating that mothers are the primary respondents in school-related activities. Overall, the respondents are mostly mothers who play a central role in supporting the education and behavior of learners with special educational needs (LSEN). Assessment results reveal that parents perceive LSEN teachers' reinforcement and discipline strategies as highly effective, with an overall mean of 3.36 ("Always True of the Teachers"). Teachers excel in providing structure, predictability, and positive reinforcement, particularly through explicit teaching of routines, visual rules, and affirmations. Discipline practices are also rated highly, emphasizing clarity, non-verbal cues, and immediate acknowledgment of positive behavior. These findings highlight teachers' consistent use of proactive, supportive, and constructive behavior management techniques. However, statistical analysis using the Kendall test shows a very weak positive correlation ($r = 0.001$, $p = 0.847$) between reinforcement and discipline, indicating no significant relationship. This suggests that while both strategies are vital in managing LSEN behavior, they operate independently rather than influencing each other directly. This means that LSEN teachers effectively implement reinforcement and discipline strategies that foster



positive behavior and engagement. Parents express strong confidence in teachers' ability to maintain structured and inclusive learning environments. Although reinforcement and discipline are both crucial, their weak correlation implies that each contributes uniquely to behavior management, underscoring the importance of balancing both approaches in LSEN education.

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, it is recommended that LSEN teachers continue to strengthen their use of reinforcement and discipline strategies to sustain positive behavioral outcomes among learners with special educational needs. Continuous professional development programs focusing on behavior management, positive reinforcement, and inclusive teaching practices should be provided to enhance teachers' skills and consistency in applying these strategies. Schools may also develop structured guidelines that integrate both reinforcement and discipline approaches to ensure a balanced and holistic framework for behavior management. Parents, being the primary caregivers and active partners in their children's education, should be encouraged to collaborate closely with teachers. Regular communication and parent-teacher conferences can help align home and school strategies, ensuring consistency in managing learners' behavior. Furthermore, parent education sessions on effective reinforcement and discipline techniques can empower families to support their children's development beyond the classroom. Lastly, future research may explore other factors influencing the relationship between reinforcement and discipline, such as classroom environment, teacher experience, and learner characteristics. This will provide deeper insights into how these strategies can be optimized to promote both behavioral and academic growth among LSEN learners.

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