



Domestic Dynamics of Parents with Foundational Educational Attainment Raising Children with Special Educational Needs

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Abstract

This study examined the domestic dynamics of parents with foundational educational attainment in raising children with special educational needs in Cabuan Elementary School, Cabuan, Cogon, City of Naga, as the basis for developing a Parenting Support Program. Specifically, it explored the challenges parents face, their coping strategies, the role of support systems, and the influence of personal beliefs on parenting practices. A qualitative research design was employed using in-depth interviews with selected parents, and thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke was used to systematically identify, analyze, and report patterns of meaning across the data. The findings revealed that parents experience significant challenges, including financial constraints, limited knowledge in managing special educational needs, and emotional stress associated with caregiving responsibilities. Despite these difficulties, parents demonstrated resilience through coping strategies such as seeking guidance from teachers and experienced individuals, practicing patience, strengthening family cooperation, and relying on faith in God. Support systems from family, community members, and school personnel were found to play a vital role in reducing caregiving burdens and improving parents' ability to support their children. Furthermore, personal beliefs, particularly faith and acceptance of the child's condition, were found to strengthen emotional stability and sustain long-term caregiving commitment. The study concludes that parents with foundational educational attainment, despite their limitations, are capable of effective caregiving through resilience, lived experience, and strong support systems. Based on the findings, a Parenting Support Program is proposed to enhance parental knowledge, strengthen coping mechanisms, improve emotional well-being, and promote collaboration among families, schools, and communities to better support children with special educational needs.

Keywords: domestic dynamics, foundational educational attainment, special educational needs, Braun and Clarke, coping strategies, support systems, Parenting Support Program, qualitative research, Cabuan Elementary School, Cabuan, Cogon, City of Naga, Philippines

Introduction

Parents play a vital role in the upbringing, development, and educational support of children with special educational needs (SEN). However, parents with foundational educational attainment, particularly those who have completed only secondary education, often encounter difficulties in understanding their child's condition, interpreting instructional guidance, and implementing appropriate learning support at home. These limitations may affect their confidence in managing behavioral concerns, reinforcing academic tasks, and coordinating effectively with teachers and specialists, resulting in emotional strain and challenges in sustaining consistent home-based support.

Children with disabilities continue to experience significant barriers in education and development worldwide. Approximately 240 million children globally are living with disabilities and are more likely to experience exclusion from education and reduced access to learning opportunities compared to their peers without disabilities (UNICEF,



2021). These inequalities reveal the continuing challenge of ensuring inclusive and equitable education systems that support all learners regardless of ability.

Furthermore, global disability frameworks emphasize that children with developmental disabilities require consistent support across education, health, and social systems. Caregiver knowledge, capacity, and engagement significantly influence the developmental and learning outcomes of children with special needs, particularly in contexts where access to formal services and professional support is limited (World Health Organization & UNICEF, n.d.). This emphasizes the importance of understanding how parents manage caregiving responsibilities within the home environment.

In the Philippine context, inclusive education continues to face implementation challenges, including limited resources, shortage of trained SPED teachers, and gaps in parental engagement and training programs (Department of Education, n.d.). These challenges become more evident in households where parents have limited formal education, as difficulties in understanding instructional strategies, therapeutic recommendations, and behavioral interventions may hinder effective home-based learning support.

In Cabuan Elementary School, City of Naga, Cebu, learners with special educational needs are included in mainstream classrooms and receive school-based interventions. However, many of their parents have completed only secondary education, which affects their ability to fully understand learning instructions and consistently apply reinforcement strategies at home. In several instances, parents rely heavily on teachers for guidance and experience difficulty sustaining structured learning support in the home environment, affecting continuity between school and home learning.

Despite global and national efforts toward inclusive education, there remains limited understanding of the domestic dynamics of parents with foundational educational attainment in raising children with special educational needs. Existing literature largely focuses on system-level concerns such as access to services and institutional barriers, while less attention is given to how parental educational background influences caregiving practices, coping strategies, and day-to-day decision-making within the home setting.

This study therefore focuses on the domestic dynamics of parents with foundational educational attainment in raising children with special educational needs. It aims to explore their lived experiences, challenges, and coping strategies, with the goal of generating insights that may strengthen home-school collaboration, improve parental support systems, and enhance inclusive education practices for children with special educational needs.

Statement of the Problem

This study sought to explore the *Domestic Dynamics of Parents with Foundational Educational Attainment in Raising Children with Special Educational Needs* at Cabuan Elementary School in Cabuan, Cogon, City of Naga, as a basis for the development of a Parenting Support Program.

The study aims to answer the central question:

How do parents with foundational educational attainment raise children with special needs?

Specifically, the study will seek answers to the following questions:

- 1.How do parents with foundational educational attainment describe the challenges they face in raising children with special educational needs?
- 2.How do parents describe the strategies and coping mechanisms they use to navigate the challenges of childcare?
- 3.How do parents describe the meaning and impact of the support provided by their families, communities, and institutions?
- 4.How do parents' personal beliefs influence the way they raise children with special educational needs?



5. Based on the findings of the study, what parenting support program may be proposed to assist parents with foundational educational attainment?

Literature Review

This study on “Domestic Dynamics of Parents with Foundational Educational Attainment in Raising Children with Special Educational Needs” assumes that exploring the lived experiences of these parents provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by parents with foundational educational attainment in raising children with special educational needs, their coping strategies in managing caregiving responsibilities, the meaning and impact of support from family, community, and educational institutions, and the influence of parents’ personal beliefs on their parenting practices. Such understanding serves as a basis for developing targeted parenting support programs that strengthen parental confidence, enhance caregiving skills, and improve their capacity to effectively support the learning and development needs of their children with special educational needs.

Likewise, this study is anchored on the Family Resilience Framework (Froma Walsh, 1996; expanded 2016), the Self-Efficacy Theory (Albert Bandura, 1977), the Social Support Theory (Sheldon Cohen & Thomas A. Wills, 1985), and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Icek Ajzen, 1991).

Theoretical Framework

Family Resilience Framework – Froma Walsh (1996; expanded 2016). The Family Resilience Framework explains how families adapt, recover, and grow stronger when facing adversity. It views families as dynamic systems that use shared belief systems, organizational patterns, and communication processes to withstand stress and maintain functioning despite challenges (Walsh, 2016).

Self-Efficacy Theory – Albert Bandura (1977). Self-Efficacy Theory explains that individuals’ beliefs in their ability to perform specific tasks influence their behavior, motivation, and persistence. People with stronger self-efficacy are more likely to take action, persist in difficulties, and achieve desired outcomes (Bandura, 1977).

Social Support Theory – Sheldon Cohen & Thomas A. Wills (1985). Social Support Theory explains that emotional, informational, and instrumental support from social networks helps individuals cope with stress and improves psychological well-being. It emphasizes that support systems buffer the negative effects of stressful life experiences (Cohen & Wills, 1985).



THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL LENSES OF THE STUDY

Theories and legal bases informing the study and its proposed output

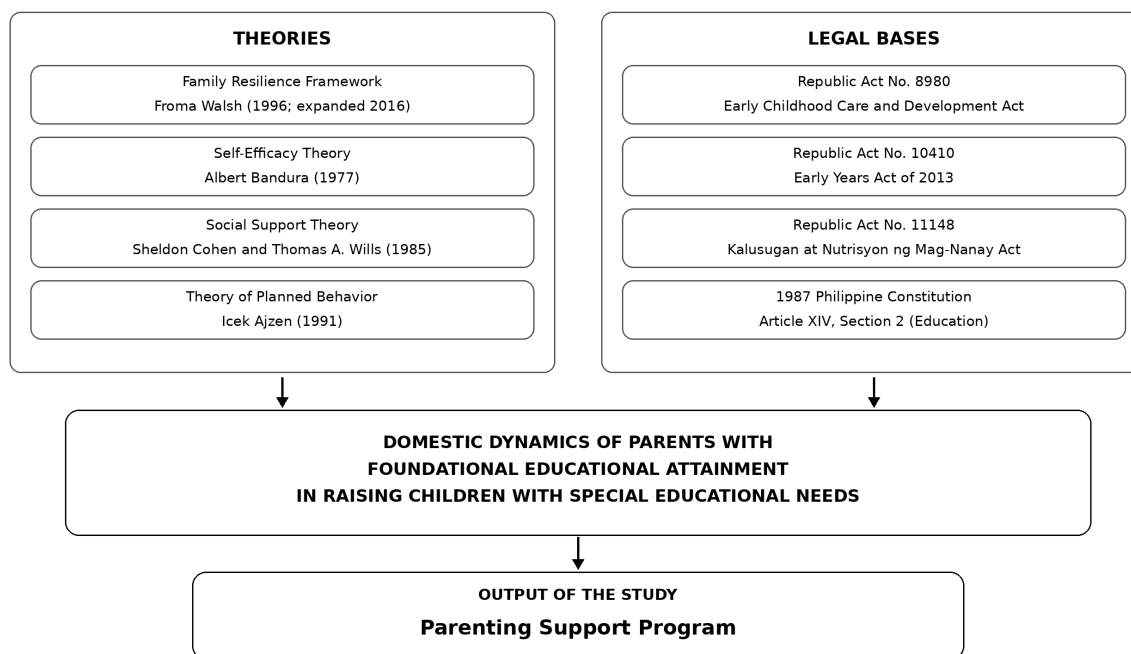


Figure 1. Theoretical and Conceptual Lenses of the Study

Theory of Planned Behavior – Icek Ajzen (1991). The Theory of Planned Behavior explains that human behavior is influenced by attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. These factors shape intentions, which in turn guide actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

Several related studies give empirical evidence that could present a better understanding of the support systems experienced by parents with foundational educational attainment in raising children with special educational needs. Shahali et al. (2024) explain that parents of children with disabilities experience emotional distress, physical exhaustion, and social isolation, and that coordinated support from health professionals, policymakers, and support groups helps improve their well-being, which aligns with the emotional encouragement and community assistance described in the present findings. Similarly, Mbatha and Mokwena (2023) emphasize that lack of support from schools and health services increases parental stress, while structured assistance programs improve coping and caregiving capacity, which corresponds to the educational and institutional support experienced by parents in this study. In addition, Marubini and Kibirige (2023) found that parents often feel isolated and burdened but benefit significantly from community understanding and support groups that provide emotional relief and shared experiences, which reflects the community assistance and family encouragement reported by the participants.

Methodology

Research Environment

The study was conducted at Cabuan Elementary School, located in Cabuan, Cogon, City of Naga. The school provided an inclusive learning environment that accommodated learners with diverse abilities, including children with special educational needs. It promoted equal access to education and support services, fostering a community where all students, regardless of their physical, cognitive, or learning differences, were encouraged to participate actively in classroom activities and school programs. Teachers in the school were committed to inclusive education practices,



adapting their teaching strategies to meet the varied needs of their learners and ensuring that no child was left behind.

This inclusive setting made it an appropriate site for exploring the lived experiences of parents raising children with disabilities. In particular, many teachers in the school had encountered parents with limited formal education who were actively involved in supporting their children's learning. These parents often communicated with teachers, shared their concerns, and openly expressed their experiences in caring for their children with special educational needs. Despite having limited educational backgrounds, they demonstrated strong commitment and willingness to support their children's development, often relying on guidance from teachers and other school personnel. Their openness in sharing their challenges, coping strategies, and sources of support provided valuable insights into their lived experiences. These included difficulties in understanding instructional materials, limited access to resources, financial constraints, and emotional stress, as well as their efforts to adapt and learn through interaction with teachers and the school community. Because of this, Cabuan Elementary School served as a meaningful and relevant context for this study, as it allowed the researcher to gather rich and authentic data from parents who were directly experiencing the realities of raising children with special educational needs while having limited formal education.



Figure 3. Location Map of the Research Environment

Research Design and Participants

This study used a qualitative research design employing Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis to explore the domestic dynamics of parents with foundational educational attainment in raising children with special educational needs. This approach was appropriate because it provided a flexible yet systematic method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (themes) within qualitative data. Unlike rigid phenomenological procedures, thematic analysis allowed the researcher to capture both explicit and implicit meanings in participants' narratives, making it suitable for examining the complex realities of parenting. It was particularly aligned with the study variables, which included the challenges faced by parents, their coping strategies, the meaning and impact of support systems, and the influence of personal beliefs, as it enabled these dimensions to emerge naturally from participants' lived accounts.



The participants of the study were the fifteen (15) parents with foundational educational attainment who were raising children with special educational needs at Cabuan Elementary School, located in Cabuan, Cogon, City of Naga. These participants had attained high school education or lower and were identified as primary caregivers directly involved in the domestic care and support of their children with special educational needs. They were selected through purposive sampling to ensure that they could provide rich, relevant, and in-depth information regarding their lived experiences.

The selection of participants was based on their ability to provide meaningful insights aligned with the variables of the study, which included parenting challenges, coping strategies, social support (meaning and impact), and parental beliefs in raising children with special educational needs. These parents were considered most appropriate for the study because their lived experiences reflected the domestic dynamics being explored, particularly in terms of how they manage caregiving responsibilities despite limited formal educational attainment.

The researcher used a semi-structured interview guide as the primary instrument to collect data for this study. This guide was designed to explore the domestic dynamics of parents with foundational educational attainment in raising children with special educational needs. The interview focused on the key variables of the study, specifically: how parents described the challenges they faced in raising children with special educational needs, the strategies and coping mechanisms they used in navigating childcare demands, how they perceived the meaning and impact of support received from family, community, and institutions, and how their personal beliefs influenced their parenting practices in raising children with special educational needs. The semi-structured format allowed the researcher to maintain consistency in questioning while also providing flexibility to probe deeper into participants' responses, ensuring rich and detailed accounts of their lived experiences.

Data collected through the interviews were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis approach, which involved familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. This method was appropriate for organizing and interpreting patterns related to the study variables, particularly parenting challenges, coping strategies, social support, and parental beliefs. To ensure the validity and appropriateness of the instrument, the interview guide was reviewed and validated by three experts: the researcher's adviser, the school head, and the Dean of the College of Education at Cebu Technological University. This validation process ensured that the questions were clear, relevant, and capable of eliciting meaningful responses aligned with the objectives of the study.

Data Collection and Analysis

Preliminary Stage. At the outset, the researcher secured approval from the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent to conduct the study. Upon approval, a formal request was submitted to the Office of the District Supervisor, forwarding the SDS approval and seeking permission to proceed with the research implementation. After approval from the PSDS, the researcher coordinated with the school head of Cabuan Elementary School to formally conduct the study within the research locale.

Following institutional permissions, informed consent forms were distributed to the selected fifteen (15) parents with foundational educational attainment. The consent form clearly explained the purpose, scope, procedures, and ethical considerations of the study, including voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. This stage ensured that participants fully understood their role in sharing their lived experiences related to parenting challenges, coping strategies, social support, and parental beliefs.

To ensure the quality and relevance of the research instrument, the semi-structured interview guide was subjected to content validation by three experts in education and qualitative research. This process ensured that the questions were aligned with the study variables and were capable of eliciting rich narratives on the domestic dynamics of parents raising children with special educational needs.

Data Gathering Stage. After securing all necessary approvals and completing instrument validation, the researcher proceeded with the actual data collection. Individual in-depth interviews were conducted with the fifteen (15)



selected parents with foundational educational attainment. These interviews focused on their lived experiences in relation to parenting challenges, coping strategies, social support, and parental beliefs in raising children with special educational needs.

Each interview was audio-recorded with the participants' consent to ensure accurate documentation of responses. Field notes were also taken to capture non-verbal cues, emotional expressions, and contextual details that supported the interpretation of data. Interviews were conducted in a private, comfortable, and non-threatening setting at a time convenient for the participants to encourage openness and honest sharing of experiences. Ethical principles, including confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation, were strictly observed throughout the process.

Post-Data Gathering Stage. After the completion of all interviews, the recorded data were transcribed verbatim and prepared for analysis. The data were then analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, which systematically organized participants' responses in relation to the study variables.

The analysis followed six phases. First, the researcher familiarized themselves with the data by reading and re-reading all transcripts to gain an overall understanding of the participants' experiences. Second, initial codes were generated by identifying meaningful segments related to parenting challenges, coping strategies, social support, and parental beliefs. Third, codes were grouped into potential themes that reflected patterns in the domestic dynamics of parents with foundational educational attainment. Fourth, themes were reviewed and refined to ensure coherence and alignment with the research questions. Fifth, themes were clearly defined and named to accurately represent the lived experiences of the participants. Finally, a comprehensive narrative report was produced, integrating all themes to reflect the essence of the parents' experiences in raising children with special educational needs.

Ethical Considerations

This study was reviewed and approved by the Research and Ethics Committee of the Graduate School, Cebu Technological University. All participants were fully informed about the purpose, objectives, and nature of the study prior to their participation. Informed consent was obtained through a signed consent form, which clearly outlined their voluntary participation. Participants were assured that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without facing any form of penalty or consequence.

The confidentiality and privacy of all participants were strictly maintained throughout the research process. Personal information and collected data were treated as highly confidential and were stored securely by the researcher. Only the researcher had access to the raw data, which were used solely for academic purposes. Identifying details were removed or coded to protect participant anonymity in all reports and publications.

Findings

Parenting Challenges

Using Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, the data were analyzed through a systematic six-phase process that included familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing and refining themes, defining and naming themes, and producing a final narrative report of the findings. Through this process, the main theme "Parenting Burdens in Raising Children with Special Educational Needs" emerged, which captures the lived challenges experienced by parents with foundational educational attainment in raising children with special educational needs. The sub-themes include financial difficulties in providing needs and therapy, which reflects the struggle of parents to sustain the cost of medical, therapeutic, and educational requirements of their children; difficulty managing child behavior, which refers to challenges in handling emotional outbursts, tantrums, and maintaining discipline at home; limited knowledge and parenting skills in handling special needs, indicating parents' lack of sufficient understanding of appropriate care strategies and interventions; and emotional stress and lack of social support, which refers to feelings of exhaustion, worry, and limited assistance from family, community, and institutions. Collectively, these sub-themes show how financial scarcity, behavioral confusion, and



social isolation converge to erode parental psychological well-being. Overall, the findings suggest that parents experience interconnected financial, behavioral, informational, and emotional challenges in supporting their children's development and daily needs.

Table 1. Parenting Challenges

Main theme	Subthemes
Parenting Burdens in Raising Children with Special Educational Needs	Financial Difficulties in Providing Needs and Therapy Difficulty Managing Child Behavior Limited Knowledge and Parenting Skills in Handling Special Needs Emotional Stress and Lack of Social Support

Financial Difficulties in Providing Needs and Therapy. The sub-theme described the experiences of parents struggling with financial limitations in providing the necessary needs, therapy, and educational support for their children with special educational needs. Parents expressed that the cost of therapy sessions, medicines, and school-related expenses is very high, making it difficult to sustain regular support for their children. For these parents, high therapy costs are not merely an expense but an impossible and painful survival choice that forces them to weigh their child's care against the family's basic needs. Some participants shared that they are often forced to prioritize certain needs over others due to insufficient income, while others reported stopping therapy temporarily when financial resources are not available. There were also accounts of borrowing money and adjusting household budgets to accommodate the continuous expenses related to the child's condition. Overall, the narratives showed that financial constraints significantly affect the consistency and quality of care provided to children. This was evident in the following responses of the participants:

"Lisod gyud ang kwarta kay mahal ang therapy ug tambal sa bata. Usahay magpili na lang mi kung unsa ang mas importante nga paliton kay dili tanan mahatag." [I really struggle with finances because therapy and medicines for the child are expensive. Sometimes we are forced to choose which needs are more important because not everything can be provided.] — Parent 3

"Dili enough ang among kita para sa iyang therapy sessions. Kung walay extra income, mapugos mi ug undang usahay sa therapy." [Our income is not enough for therapy sessions. If there is no extra income, we are sometimes forced to stop therapy.] — Parent 7

Limited Knowledge and Parenting Skills in Handling Special Needs. The sub-theme described the experiences of parents who face difficulties due to limited knowledge and lack of training in handling children with special educational needs. Parents expressed confusion and uncertainty when dealing with their child's behavior and needs, especially during challenging situations such as misbehavior or emotional outbursts. Specifically, parents struggle to manage severe and unpredictable emotional outbursts at home, with no clear guidance on how to respond effectively. Some participants shared that they rely mainly on personal experience as they do not have formal training or guidance in special needs care. Others reported using trial-and-error approaches in managing their child's behavior and learning needs. Overall, the narratives showed that insufficient knowledge and skills create challenges in providing appropriate and effective caregiving strategies. This was evident in the following responses of the participants:

"Wala gyud ko kahibalo unsa sakto buhaton kung mag misbehave siya. Maglibog ko usahay kung unsaon nako siya pagduol." [I really do not know what to do when she behaves badly. Sometimes I get confused about how to approach him/her.] — Parent 1

"Lisod kaayo kay wala ko training sa pag-atiman ug special needs. Usahay mag trial and error na lang ko sa akong pamaagi." [It is very difficult because I have no training in caring for special needs. Sometimes I just do trial and error in my approach.] — Parent 6



Emotional Stress and Lack of Social Support. The sub-theme described the experiences of parents who experience emotional strain and limited social support while raising children with special educational needs. Parents expressed feelings of exhaustion, loneliness, and emotional burden as they often feel solely responsible for their child's care. Some participants shared that they frequently worry about their child's future and lack someone to talk to about their emotional struggles. Others emphasized that limited community support contributes to increased stress and pressure in fulfilling parenting responsibilities. Overall, the narratives showed that emotional challenges are intensified by insufficient social support systems, affecting parents' psychological well-being and resilience. This was evident in the following responses of the participants:

"Kapoy kaayo emotionally kay usahay murag ako ra gyud sa tanan. Wala kaayo koy tabang gikan sa uban." [It is very emotionally exhausting because sometimes I feel like I am alone in everything.]

"Malisod ko emotionally kay pirmi ko maghunahuna sa iyang future. Wala kaayo koy masultihan sa akong gibati." [I struggle emotionally because I always think about her future. I have no one to talk to about my feelings.] — Parent 10

The data revealed that parents with foundational educational attainment experienced Parenting Burdens in Raising Children with Special Educational Needs, which reflect the interconnected challenges they encounter in providing care, guidance, and emotional support to their children. These burdens affect their capacity to fully meet the financial, behavioral, and emotional demands of parenting and require continuous adjustment, resilience, and dedication. Despite these challenges, parents consistently demonstrated perseverance and commitment in fulfilling their responsibilities.

Coping Strategies

Using Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, the data were analyzed through a systematic six-phase process that included familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing and refining themes, defining and naming themes, and producing a final narrative report of the findings. Through this process, the main theme "Resilient Parenting Approaches in Caring for Children with Special Educational Needs" emerged, which reflects the strategies and coping mechanisms used by parents in managing the demands of childcare. The sub-themes include building strong family cooperation and support, which refers to relying on assistance and shared responsibility among family members in caring for the child; developing patience and consistent child guidance, which involves the use of calm, understanding, and structured discipline in handling child behavior; seeking advice and learning effective parenting practices, which indicates parents' efforts to gain knowledge from teachers, professionals, and experienced individuals to improve caregiving skills; and maintaining faith to overcome challenges, which reflects the role of spiritual belief in sustaining hope, strength, and emotional stability while facing parenting difficulties. Overall, these strategies show how parents adapt to challenges by strengthening family involvement, improving parenting practices, and maintaining emotional resilience.

Table 2. Coping Strategies

Main theme	Subthemes
Resilient Parenting Approaches in Caring for Children with Special Educational Needs	Building Strong Family Cooperation and Support; Developing Patience and Consistent Child Guidance; Seeking Advice and Learning Effective Parenting Practices; Maintaining Faith to overcome challenges

Building Strong Family Cooperation and Support. The sub-theme described the experiences of parents in relying on shared responsibilities and collaboration within the family in raising children with special educational needs. Parents expressed that caregiving becomes more manageable when family members work together in attending to the child's daily needs, supervision, and emotional support. Some participants shared that their spouses, children, siblings, and relatives actively assist in caregiving tasks, especially during work or busy schedules. Others emphasized that family members serve as their primary source of strength and support, making them feel less alone in managing the challenges of parenting. Overall, the narratives showed that strong family cooperation plays a crucial role in



reducing caregiving burdens and improving parents' ability to respond to their children's needs. This was evident in the following responses of the participants:

"Nagtinabangay gyud mi sa pamilya sa pag-atiman sa bata kay lisod kung usa ra ang magdala. Ang akong asawa ug mga anak motabang kung kinahanglan." [We really help each other in the family in taking care of the child because it is difficult if only one carries the responsibility. My spouse and children help whenever needed.] — Parent 2

"Usahay mangayo ko ug tabang sa akong igsoon ug mga paryente kung busy ko sa trabaho. Maayo kay mosabot sila sa sitwasyon sa akong anak." [Sometimes I ask help from my siblings and relatives when I am busy with work. It is good because they understand my child's situation.] — Parent 11

Developing Patience and Consistent Child Guidance. The sub-theme described the experiences of parents in practicing patience and maintaining consistent guidance when dealing with the behaviors and needs of their children with special educational needs. Parents shared that they often need to repeat instructions several times and remain calm, especially when their children have difficulty understanding or easily become frustrated. Some participants expressed that controlling their emotions and avoiding anger is necessary to prevent worsening their child's behavior. Others emphasized the importance of consistent discipline and daily reminders to help their children learn appropriate behavior and routines. Overall, the narratives showed that patience, emotional control, and consistency are essential strategies in managing behavioral challenges and supporting child development. This was evident in the following responses of the participants:

"Gina-explain nako balik-balik ang instructions ug magpuyo ko ug pasensya kay dali siya ma-frustrate." [I repeat instructions many times and I remain patient because he/she gets frustrated easily.] — Parent 6

"Gina-practice nako nga dili ko dali masuko kay mas makasamot sa iyang behavior kung kalma ko dili." [I practice not getting angry easily because it worsens his/her behavior if I am not calm.] — Parent 1

Seeking Advice and Learning Effective Parenting Practices. The sub-theme described the experiences of parents in actively seeking knowledge and guidance to improve their parenting practices in raising children with special educational needs. Participants shared that they consult teachers, experienced individuals, and other parents to better understand how to handle their child's condition and behavior. Some also reported using online resources and educational materials to learn appropriate strategies and interventions. Others emphasized participation in school meetings as an important avenue for gaining insights and practical guidance from professionals. Overall, the narratives showed that parents strengthen their caregiving capacity by continuously learning and seeking support from both formal and informal sources of knowledge. This was evident in the following responses of the participants:

"Mangutana ko sa teacher ug sa uban nga nakasulay na ani nga situation para makahibalo ko unsa buhaton." [I ask teachers and others who have experienced the same situation so I can learn what to do.] — Parent 4

"Ga-attend ko usahay ug meetings sa school para makat-on ko unsaon pagtabang sa akong anak." [I sometimes attend school meetings to learn how to help my child.] — Parent 13

Maintaining Faith to Overcome Challenges. The sub-theme described the experiences of parents in relying on spiritual beliefs and faith as a source of strength in dealing with the challenges of raising children with special educational needs. Parents shared that prayer serves as a coping mechanism that helps ease emotional burdens and worries. Some participants expressed that their faith in God gives them strength to continue despite daily difficulties and uncertainties. Others emphasized that maintaining a positive mindset rooted in spiritual belief helps them endure stress and remain hopeful about their child's future. Overall, the narratives showed that faith plays a central role in sustaining emotional resilience and providing meaning to their caregiving experiences. This was evident in the following responses of the participants:

In terms of Building Strong Family Cooperation and Support, parents described how shared responsibilities within the family help them manage the demands of caring for children with special educational needs. They explained that



caregiving becomes more manageable when spouses, children, siblings, and relatives actively participate in providing assistance. Some parents noted that family members help in attending to daily needs and supervision, especially during times when they are busy with work or other responsibilities. Others expressed that having family support reduces feelings of isolation and strengthens their ability to cope with parenting challenges. These accounts indicate that collaboration within the family plays an important role in easing caregiving responsibilities.

For Developing Patience and Consistent Child Guidance, parents described the need to remain calm, patient, and consistent when managing their children's behavior and learning needs. They reported that instructions often need to be repeated several times due to difficulties in understanding and attention. Some parents emphasized that controlling anger and maintaining a calm approach prevents worsening of behavioral issues. Others shared that consistent discipline and daily reminders are necessary in helping their children learn appropriate behavior and routines. These accounts show that patience and consistency are essential in supporting child development and managing behavioral challenges.

In terms of Seeking Advice and Learning Effective Parenting Practices, parents described their efforts to improve their caregiving skills by seeking information and guidance from various sources. They shared that they consult teachers, experienced parents, and other individuals who have knowledge about special educational needs. Some parents also reported using online resources to learn strategies for managing behavior and supporting learning. Others emphasized participation in school meetings as a way of gaining practical advice and understanding their child's needs. These accounts indicate that continuous learning contributes to better parenting practices and improved child support.

Family Community and Institutional Support

Using Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, the data were analyzed through a systematic six-phase process that included familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing and refining themes, defining and naming themes, and producing a final narrative report of the findings. Through this process, the main theme "Support Systems as Sources of Strength and Empowerment" emerged, which reflects how parents with foundational educational attainment understand and experience the support provided by their families, communities, and institutions in raising children with special educational needs. The sub-themes include emotional encouragement from family members, which refers to the moral support, understanding, and reassurance received from close relatives that help parents manage stress and emotional burdens; community assistance in reducing parenting burdens, which involves practical help, cooperation, and shared responsibility from neighbors and community members that ease daily caregiving demands; and educational and institutional support for child development, which refers to assistance from schools, teachers, and related institutions in providing guidance, learning opportunities, and interventions that support the child's growth and development. Overall, the findings show that these support systems contribute to strengthening parents' capacity to cope with challenges and sustain their caregiving responsibilities.

Table 3. Family Community and Institutional Support

Main theme	Subthemes
Support Systems as Sources of Strength and Empowerment	Emotional Encouragement from Family Members; Community Assistance in Reducing Parenting Burdens; Educational and Institutional Support for Child Development

Emotional Encouragement from Family Members. The sub-theme described the experiences of parents receiving emotional support, reassurance, and encouragement from immediate family members in managing the challenges of raising children with special educational needs. Parents expressed that their families provide comfort during stressful situations and serve as their primary source of emotional strength. Some participants shared that their spouses and children actively encourage them to stay strong and continue caring for their child despite difficulties. Others emphasized that family support helps them maintain peace of mind and prevents feelings of isolation and emotional overwhelm. Overall, the narratives showed that emotional encouragement from family members plays a significant role in strengthening parents' emotional well-being



“Ang akong pamilya pirmi mohatag ug kusog ug tambag nako kung ma-stress ko sa akong anak. Dako kaayo ilang tabang emotionally kay dili ko mag-inusara.” [My family always gives me strength and advice when I get stressed about my child. Their emotional support is very big because I do not feel alone.] — Parent 3

Community Assistance in Reducing Parenting Burdens. The sub-theme described the experiences of parents in receiving support from neighbors, community members, and local institutions that help reduce their caregiving responsibilities. Parents shared that neighbors sometimes assist in taking care of their children when they are busy, which eases their daily burden. Some participants also noted that their community members show understanding and acceptance, allowing them to feel comfortable and not judged in their situation. Others emphasized the importance of barangay support such as assistance and referrals, which help address the needs of their children. Overall, the narratives showed that community involvement contributes to reducing parenting burdens and fostering a more supportive environment for families. This was evident in the following responses of the participants:

“Ang mga silingan usahay motabang sa pag-atiman sa akong anak kung busy ko. Dako kaayo ni ug tabang sa akong adlaw-adlaw nga burden.” [Neighbors sometimes help in taking care of my child when I am busy. This is a big help in my daily burden.] — Parent 2

“Sa among community, naay mga tawo nga mosabot sa kahimtang sa akong anak ug dili mohusga. Maayo kay dili ko maulaw sa akong sitwasyon.” [In our community, there are people who understand my child’s condition and do not judge. It is good because I do not feel ashamed of my situation.] — Parent 9

Educational and Institutional Support for Child Development. The sub-theme described the experiences of parents in receiving guidance and assistance from teachers, schools, and educational institutions in supporting the development of their children with special educational needs. Parents expressed that teachers provide advice and strategies that help them understand how to better support their children’s learning at home and in school. Some participants shared that school activities contribute to the development of their child’s skills and abilities. Others emphasized that institutional support helps them better understand their child’s needs, enabling them to provide more appropriate guidance and care at home. Overall, the narratives showed that educational and institutional support plays a vital role in enhancing both parental capacity and child development outcomes. This was evident in the following responses of the participants:

“Ang teacher sa akong anak pirmi mohatag ug advice kung unsaon pagtabang niya sa eskwela. Dako kaayo ug impact sa iyang learning.” [My child’s teacher always gives advice on how to help her in school. It has a big impact on her learning.] — Parent 4

“Ang institution ug teachers nagtabang para mas masabtan nako ang needs sa akong anak. Nakatabang ni sa akong pag-guide niya sa balay.” [The institution and teachers help me understand my child’s needs. This helps me guide him/her at home.] — Parent 15

In terms of Emotional Encouragement from Family Members, parents described receiving emotional reassurance, comfort, and motivation from immediate family members during stressful and difficult situations. They shared that their spouses, children, and close relatives provide words of encouragement and emotional support that help them cope with exhaustion and worries related to caregiving. Some parents expressed that having family members who listen and understand their situation helps them feel less isolated and more emotionally stable. These accounts indicate that emotional encouragement within the family contributes significantly to reducing stress and strengthening parental resilience.

For Community Assistance in Reducing Parenting Burdens, parents described receiving practical help and understanding from neighbors, community members, and local institutions. They reported that neighbors sometimes assist in taking care of their children during busy periods, which helps ease daily responsibilities. Some participants also shared that community members show acceptance and understanding of their child’s condition,



allowing them to feel more comfortable and less judged. Others noted that barangay assistance and referrals provide additional support for their child's needs. These accounts indicate that community involvement contributes to easing caregiving demands and creating a more supportive environment for families.

In terms of Educational and Institutional Support for Child Development, parents described the assistance they receive from teachers, schools, and other institutions in supporting their child's learning and development. They shared that teachers provide guidance and strategies that help them better understand how to support their child both at home and in school. Some parents noted that school activities contribute to the development of their child's skills and abilities. Others expressed that institutional support helps them gain clearer understanding of their child's needs, allowing them to provide more appropriate guidance and care. These accounts indicate that educational and institutional involvement plays a key role in improving both parental capacity and child development outcomes.

Personal Beliefs

Using Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, the data were analyzed through a systematic six-phase process that included familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing and refining themes, defining and naming themes, and producing a final narrative report of the findings. Through this process, the main theme "Belief-Driven Parenting Approaches in Child Rearing" emerged, which reflects how parents' personal beliefs influence their way of raising children with special educational needs. The sub-themes include strong faith in God as guidance in parenting, which refers to parents relying on spiritual beliefs as a source of strength, direction, and comfort in making parenting decisions; and acceptance of the child's condition as part of life, which indicates the recognition and understanding of the child's situation as a meaningful part of their family experience, leading to more adaptive and supportive caregiving practices. Overall, these beliefs shape parents' attitudes and responses, guiding them to provide care with patience, hope, and acceptance despite the challenges they encounter.

Table 4. Personal Beliefs

Main theme	Subthemes
Belief-Driven Parenting Approaches in Child Rearing	Strong Faith in God as Guidance in Parenting; Acceptance of the Child's Condition as Part of Life

Strong Faith in God as Guidance in Parenting. The sub-theme described the experiences of parents who rely on their strong faith in God as a source of guidance, comfort, and strength in raising children with special educational needs. Parents expressed that prayer serves as their primary coping mechanism in managing worries and emotional stress related to their child's condition. Some participants shared that their belief in God's plan provides them with hope and motivation to continue fulfilling their parenting responsibilities despite difficulties. Others emphasized that their faith helps them remain resilient and prevents them from giving up during challenging situations. Overall, the narratives showed that spiritual faith plays a central role in shaping parents' coping strategies and emotional stability in caregiving. This was evident in the following responses of the participants:

"Perme ko mag-ampo kay mao ra gyud na makapahupay sa akong kabalaka sa akong anak. Nagtuo ko nga gi-guide gyud mi sa Ginoo sa among situation." [I always pray because it is the only thing that eases my worries about my child. I believe that God is guiding us in our situation.] — Parent 1

"Kung lisod na kaayo ang adlaw, magtuo ko nga naa gyud plano ang Ginoo para sa akong anak. Mao na makahatag nako ug kusog." [When the day becomes very difficult, I believe that God has a plan for my child. That gives me strength.] — Parent 6

Acceptance of the Child's Condition as Part of Life. The sub-theme described the experiences of parents in accepting their child's condition as a natural and meaningful part of their family life. Parents shared that acceptance allows them to shift their focus toward providing care and support rather than comparing their child to others. Some participants expressed that acceptance developed over time, leading to greater peace of mind and emotional adjustment. Others emphasized that accepting their child's condition helped them become more patient,



understanding, and committed to their caregiving role. Overall, the narratives showed that acceptance contributes to emotional stability and more positive parenting practices in dealing with special educational needs. This was evident in the following responses of the participants:

“Gidawat na nako nga mao ni ang kahimtang sa akong anak, mao nga nag-focus na lang ko sa pag-atiman niya. Dili na nako siya ginacompare sa uban.” [I have accepted my child’s condition, so I focus on taking care of him/her. I no longer compare him/her to others.] — Parent 3

“Lisod sa una, pero sa panahon gidawat nako nga parte ni sa among kinabuhi. Mas nakabati ko ug kalinaw pagkahuman nako nadawat ang iyang sitwasyon.” [It was difficult at first, but over time I accepted that this is part of our life. I felt more peace after accepting his/her situation.] — Parent 8

In terms of Strong Faith in God as Guidance in Parenting, parents described relying on prayer and spiritual beliefs as their primary source of strength in dealing with the demands of caregiving. They shared that faith in God helps them manage worries, cope with stress, and maintain hope in difficult situations. Some parents expressed that their belief in God’s plan provides reassurance and motivation to continue fulfilling their responsibilities despite hardships. Others noted that spirituality helps them remain strong and prevents them from giving up when challenges become overwhelming. These accounts indicate that faith plays a central role in sustaining emotional stability and guiding parenting decisions.

For Acceptance of the Child’s Condition as Part of Life, parents described the process of accepting their child’s condition as a meaningful step toward more positive and adaptive caregiving. They reported that acceptance allows them to focus more on providing care rather than comparing their child to others or dwelling on limitations. Some parents shared that acceptance developed gradually over time, leading to greater emotional peace and understanding of their child’s needs. Others emphasized that acceptance helped them become more patient, responsible, and committed to their parenting role. These accounts show that acceptance contributes to improved emotional adjustment and more supportive parenting practices.

Output of the Study

The Parenting Support Program is developed in response to the findings of the study on Domestic Dynamics of Parents with Foundational Educational Attainment in Raising Children with Special Educational Needs, which revealed that parents experience significant financial, knowledge-related, and emotional challenges in providing care for their children. These difficulties often lead to stress, uncertainty in caregiving practices, and reliance on trial-and-error approaches due to limited formal training in managing special educational needs. Despite these challenges, parents consistently demonstrate resilience through patience, family cooperation, faith, and active seeking of advice, indicating a strong willingness to improve their caregiving capacity when appropriate support is available.

The program is further justified by the evident need to strengthen parents’ knowledge and skills in handling the learning, behavioral, and developmental needs of their children, as the study showed that limited understanding remains a major barrier to effective caregiving. It also responds to the emotional burdens experienced by parents, including exhaustion, worry, and feelings of isolation, by providing structured psychosocial support and coping strategies. Moreover, the findings highlight the crucial role of family, community, and institutional support systems; however, these supports are often informal and inconsistent, necessitating a more organized and accessible framework to maximize their effectiveness. Ultimately, the Parenting Support Program is designed to bridge these gaps by providing structured training, emotional support mechanisms, and strengthened collaboration between parents, schools, and community stakeholders. It aims to empower parents with foundational educational attainment to become more confident, informed, and resilient caregivers, ensuring improved outcomes for children with special educational needs through sustained and holistic support.



Discussion

The findings reveal that parents with foundational educational attainment experience Parenting Burdens in Raising Children with Special Educational Needs, which are reflected in financial, knowledge-related, and emotional challenges. Financial difficulties were commonly reported as parents struggled to sustain therapy sessions, medicines, school expenses, and daily needs due to limited income, often forcing them to prioritize or delay essential services. In addition, parents described limited knowledge and skills in managing their child's condition, which led to confusion and reliance on trial-and-error approaches in handling behaviors and caregiving demands. Emotional stress was also evident as parents shared feelings of exhaustion, worry, and loneliness, especially when caregiving responsibilities were carried with minimal support. During the interviews, participants appeared emotionally engaged and reflective, particularly when discussing financial strain and emotional burdens, yet they consistently expressed commitment to continue caring for their children despite the challenges they face.

In response to these challenges, parents developed Resilient Parenting Approaches in Caring for Children with Special Educational Needs, which include strengthening family cooperation, practicing patience, seeking guidance, and maintaining faith. They emphasized that caregiving becomes more manageable when responsibilities are shared among family members such as spouses, children, and relatives who assist in daily care and supervision. Parents also described the importance of patience and consistency in managing behavior, often repeating instructions calmly and maintaining emotional control to avoid worsening their child's behavior. Seeking advice from teachers, experienced individuals, and other sources of information was also a common strategy used to improve their caregiving practices. In addition, faith in God was repeatedly mentioned as a source of strength, hope, and emotional stability that helps parents continue despite difficulties. During the interviews, participants were open and expressive, showing emotional involvement when narrating difficulties and confidence when describing how they cope with caregiving demands.

The findings further show that support systems serve as sources of strength and empowerment for parents with foundational educational attainment in raising children with special educational needs. Emotional encouragement from family members was described as a key factor in reducing stress and providing reassurance, especially during moments of exhaustion and worry. Community assistance was also highlighted, where neighbors and local members provide practical help and understanding that ease caregiving burdens and reduce feelings of isolation. Moreover, educational and institutional support from teachers and schools was described as essential in guiding parents on how to better support their child's learning and development both at home and in school settings. Throughout the interviews, participants expressed gratitude and emotional openness, particularly when sharing experiences of family support and institutional assistance, reflecting how these support systems contribute to their daily caregiving experiences.

The findings also indicate that parents' personal beliefs strongly influence their Belief-Driven Parenting Approaches in Child Rearing, particularly through faith in God and acceptance of their child's condition. Strong faith in God was described as a guiding force that provides strength, hope, and direction in managing daily caregiving responsibilities, especially during difficult and uncertain situations. Acceptance of the child's condition was described as a gradual process that allows parents to focus more on care and understanding rather than comparison or frustration, resulting in greater emotional stability and patience. These belief systems shape how parents interpret challenges and guide their responses in caregiving situations, promoting perseverance and commitment despite ongoing difficulties. During the interviews, participants showed sincerity

Several related studies give empirical evidence that could present a better understanding of the support systems experienced by parents with foundational educational attainment in raising children with special educational needs. Shahali et al. (2024) explain that parents of children with disabilities experience emotional distress, physical exhaustion, and social isolation, and that coordinated support from health professionals, policymakers, and support groups helps improve their well-being, which aligns with the emotional encouragement and community assistance described in the present findings. Similarly, Mbatha and Mokwena (2023) emphasize that lack of support from schools and health services increases parental stress, while structured assistance programs improve coping and



caregiving capacity, which corresponds to the educational and institutional support experienced by parents in this study. In addition, Marubini and Kibirige (2023) found that parents often feel isolated and burdened but benefit significantly from community understanding and support groups that provide emotional relief and shared experiences, which reflects the community assistance and family encouragement reported by the participants.

Conclusion

The findings lead to the conclusion that parents with foundational educational attainment experience significant financial, knowledge-related, and emotional challenges in raising children with Special Educational Needs; however, these limitations do not prevent them from providing meaningful and committed care to their children. Despite their restricted formal educational background, they demonstrate adaptive and resilient parenting by relying on practical strategies such as seeking advice from teachers and experienced individuals, strengthening family cooperation, practicing patience and emotional control, and maintaining faith in God as a source of strength and hope. Their caregiving practices are further enhanced through support systems from family, community, and educational institutions, which help reduce stress, improve understanding of their child's needs, and provide both emotional and practical assistance. These findings suggest that effective parenting in the context of Special Educational Needs is not determined solely by educational attainment, but is strongly influenced by lived experience, resilience, and available support systems. Ultimately, parents with foundational education are capable of raising their children with dedication and perseverance, as their commitment, adaptability, and belief systems enable them to overcome challenges and sustain caregiving despite persistent difficulties.

The researcher is recommended to utilize the findings as a basis for designing a structured parenting support program that directly addresses financial, emotional, and knowledge-related challenges while strengthening coping mechanisms and support systems among parents.

Future researchers are recommended to conduct further studies on the influence of parental educational attainment on caregiving practices, coping strategies, and child developmental outcomes, as well as to expand the scope of the study to include larger and more diverse populations for broader applicability.

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