



Assessing Teachers' Perceptions, Attitudes, and Preparedness in Managing Special Needs Learners in Inclusive Classrooms

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Abstract

This study assessed teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and preparedness in managing learners with special needs in inclusive classrooms in the Canlaon City Division during School Year 2025–2026. Using a descriptive-quantitative research design with a correlational approach, the study involved 30 teacher-respondents selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through a validated survey questionnaire and analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, and Pearson *r*. Findings showed that teachers had very positive perceptions of inclusive education and generally positive attitudes, especially in instructional willingness and professional commitment, while teaching confidence was comparatively lower. Teachers were also found to be prepared in all areas, with instructional strategies receiving the highest rating. Moreover, significant moderate positive relationships were found between teachers' perceptions and preparedness, and between teachers' attitudes and preparedness. These results indicate that teachers with more positive perceptions and attitudes tend to be more prepared to manage inclusive classrooms. Based on the findings, an enhancement program was proposed to strengthen teachers' competence and inclusive classroom practices.

Keywords: Special Education, Inclusive Education, Teachers' Perceptions, Teachers' Attitudes, Teacher Preparedness, Learners with Special Needs, Descriptive-Quantitative Design, Canlaon City Negros Oriental

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has emerged as an important priority in modern educational reform because of its emphasis on fairness, social justice, and recognition of learner diversity (Kenny et al., 2023). It supports the integration of learners with special needs into regular classrooms, not only by providing access to schooling but also by ensuring their active participation, appropriate learning support, and overall development (Judilla et al., 2022). The success of inclusive education largely rests on teachers, as they play a direct role in putting inclusive practices into action within the classroom (Rojo-Ramos et al., 2023). Their perceptions, attitudes, and level of readiness influence how inclusive education policies are carried out in actual teaching situations and how learners with special needs are assisted in mainstream learning environments (Mucherah et al., 2024). While many teachers generally express supportive views toward inclusion, concerns remain regarding their teaching competence, self-confidence, and preparedness in responding to varied learner needs (Woodcock et al., 2022; Bugani et al., 2025). On a global scale, inclusive education is still affected by several barriers, including insufficient instructional readiness, limited confidence in handling diverse classrooms, weak professional support, gaps in teaching methodology, and minimal community participation (Rojo-Ramos et al., 2023). Common challenges across different educational settings also include inadequate teacher preparation, limited coordination between general education and special education teachers, and lack of access to specialists and instructional materials (Rojo-Ramos et al., 2023).

In the Philippines, the implementation of inclusive education is influenced by policy goals, institutional limitations, and classroom-level conditions that shape teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and preparedness. Although national policies clearly promote inclusive education, its actual success depends on teachers' ability to apply these principles in daily classroom instruction. The Department of Education, through its policy guidelines for providing educational programs and services to learners with disabilities under the K to 12 Basic Education Program, highlights the importance of offering suitable, responsive, and inclusive learning opportunities for learners with disabilities. However, studies show that while teachers often possess basic awareness and favorable attitudes toward inclusion, they continue to encounter difficulties in instructional delivery, implementation of individualized education plans,



curriculum adjustment, and classroom modification (Judilla et al., 2022). Other factors, such as weak communication systems, limited organizational support, and insufficient resources, also affect teachers' practical readiness (Penales, 2024). Broader institutional gaps further point to the need for stronger and more sustainable inclusion mechanisms (Dela Fuente, 2021). Qualitative findings likewise indicate that initial training in special education helps improve teachers' awareness and empathy, but continuous professional development and strong administrative support remain necessary to strengthen their pedagogical competence and confidence (Bugani et al., 2025; Salvaña & Protacio, 2025). At the local level, Canlaon City Division offers a meaningful setting for studying inclusive education because selected public schools in the area are already serving learners with special needs through inclusive and special education-related programs. A recent study conducted in Canlaon City, Negros Oriental identified four public schools with enrolled students with special needs and services for mainstreamed learners in inclusive classrooms. This shows that inclusive education is not only a national policy direction but also a present reality in local classrooms. Such a situation emphasizes the need for teachers in the division to have sufficient knowledge, positive attitudes, and adequate preparedness in supporting learners with special needs. Since Canlaon City is located in Negros Oriental, schools may vary in terms of access to specialized personnel, instructional materials, teacher training, and support services. For this reason, localized evidence is needed to determine the extent to which teachers are prepared to respond to diverse learning needs. This study, therefore, addresses the need for division-level data that can inform more responsive teacher development initiatives and inclusive classroom support systems.

Despite the increasing focus on inclusive education, several research gaps remain evident. First, many existing studies examine teachers' perceptions or attitudes separately, with limited attention given to how perceptions, attitudes, and preparedness work together as interconnected factors that influence classroom practice. This leaves uncertainty as to which factor most strongly contributes to effective inclusion and how these variables operate collectively in real classroom contexts (Bugani et al., 2025; Salvaña & Protacio, 2025). Second, there is limited division-level research from rural and semi-urban areas such as Canlaon City Division, where resource availability, class size, teacher assignment, and access to specialized support may affect inclusive education implementation. Existing local evidence confirms that learners with special needs are already enrolled in Canlaon City public schools, thereby increasing the need for teachers who are properly trained and prepared to carry out inclusive practices. Third, only a few studies assess specific enhancement programs that convert research findings into concrete improvements in teacher competence and instructional practice.

To respond to these gaps, the present study used a structured quantitative-correlational design and validated research instruments to examine teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and preparedness within a single framework. This approach enabled the researcher to determine the significant relationships among the variables and identify how teachers' perceptions and attitudes are associated with their preparedness in handling learners with special needs. By focusing on Canlaon City Division, the study provides localized empirical evidence that reflects actual classroom conditions. The findings also served as the basis for developing a focused enhancement program intended to strengthen teacher training, improve access to instructional resources, and support continuous professional development. Thus, the study goes beyond describing current conditions by offering practical strategies that may help improve the implementation of inclusive education in the local setting.

Literature Review

This study is anchored on selected theoretical perspectives and legal foundations that explain and support the role of teachers in addressing the needs of learners with special needs in inclusive classroom settings. The Theory of Planned Behavior, Social Cognitive Theory, and Ecological Systems Theory provide the conceptual basis for understanding how teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and preparedness are influenced by their beliefs, sense of capability, and surrounding environment. These theories are further supported by Philippine legal mandates, particularly Republic Act No. 10533, Republic Act No. 7277, Republic Act No. 11650, and Republic Act No. 10968, which promote inclusive, competency-based, and rights-based education while emphasizing teacher readiness, continuous professional growth, and institutional support in the implementation of inclusive education.

The Theory of Planned Behavior, introduced by Icek Ajzen in 1991, explains that a person's intention to perform a particular action is the closest predictor of actual behavior. The theory identifies three major factors that shape intention: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms or perceived social expectations, and perceived behavioral



control, which refers to one's belief about the ease or difficulty of performing the behavior. This theory expanded the earlier Theory of Reasoned Action by adding perceived behavioral control to account for situations where individuals may not have complete control over their actions. In general, individuals are more likely to act when they hold favorable attitudes toward the behavior, believe that important people support the behavior, and feel capable of carrying it out. Because of this, TPB has been widely used in different fields to explain decision-making, behavioral intentions, and actual practices.

In education, recent studies have used the Theory of Planned Behavior to examine teachers' intentions and actions in inclusive classroom settings. For example, a study in Ghana found that teachers' attitudes and perceived self-efficacy, which is closely related to perceived behavioral control, significantly influenced their intention to use inclusive teaching practices. However, subjective norms showed varying effects depending on the context. Teachers who had positive views of inclusion and felt more capable of teaching diverse learners were more likely to demonstrate inclusive classroom behaviors (Amonteng et al., 2026). Similarly, Urton et al. (2023) used the theory to explain teachers' willingness to implement inclusive practices in regular classrooms, showing that TPB helps clarify why some teachers are more ready and motivated to adopt inclusive strategies than others.

The Theory of Planned Behavior is relevant to the present study because it explains how teachers' perceptions and attitudes may influence their preparedness in managing learners with special needs. Teachers' attitudes toward inclusion reflect their evaluative beliefs, while their perceptions of inclusive education and their sense of competence are connected to perceived control and capability. Based on TPB, teachers who possess positive attitudes and stronger perceived control are more likely to develop the intention and willingness to apply inclusive practices effectively. In this study, the theory supports the examination of how perceptions and attitudes are related to teachers' level of preparedness and provides a basis for developing an enhancement program that strengthens the psychological and professional factors needed for effective inclusive teaching.

Social Cognitive Theory, developed by Albert Bandura in 1986, explains human learning and behavior as the result of continuous interaction among personal factors, actions, and environmental conditions. Bandura emphasized that individuals are active agents who interpret and influence their surroundings, rather than simply responding to external conditions. This process is known as reciprocal determinism. A central idea in this theory is self-efficacy, or a person's belief in their ability to plan and carry out actions needed to achieve desired outcomes. Self-efficacy affects the decisions people make, the effort they exert, their persistence when faced with difficulties, and their ability to recover from setbacks. In the field of education, Social Cognitive Theory highlights how teachers' beliefs about their instructional abilities, together with their teaching behavior and school environment, influence their classroom decisions and professional practice.

Recent studies have applied Social Cognitive Theory to inclusive education by examining how teacher beliefs, confidence, and school support affect inclusive classroom practices. Woodcock et al. (2023), for instance, emphasized that teachers with stronger self-efficacy are more likely to use inclusive teaching strategies and remain persistent in addressing diverse learner needs. Other studies have also shown that supportive school environments, professional development, and collegial collaboration can strengthen teacher self-efficacy and improve engagement in inclusive education practices (Zhang et al., 2025). These findings show that Social Cognitive Theory is useful in explaining how personal beliefs and environmental support systems work together to shape teachers' readiness and instructional behavior in inclusive classrooms.

Social Cognitive Theory is significant to the present study because it explains how teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and preparedness interact in the management of learners with special needs. The concept of self-efficacy helps clarify why teachers who believe in their ability to implement inclusive strategies tend to demonstrate greater confidence and readiness in handling diverse learners. In this study, teachers' perceptions and attitudes are viewed as personal cognitive factors that interact with school-level conditions, such as administrative support, professional development opportunities, and availability of resources. Thus, the theory supports the investigation of both psychological and contextual factors that affect inclusive teaching. It also informs the development of an enhancement program that aims to improve teachers' competence, confidence, and instructional effectiveness.



Ecological Systems Theory, introduced by Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979, provides a broader perspective for understanding human development within different layers of environmental influence. The theory explains that individuals develop and behave not in isolation but through continuous interaction with their surroundings. These environmental systems include the microsystem, which involves immediate settings such as the home and school; the mesosystem, which refers to the connections between these immediate settings; the exosystem, which includes external structures that indirectly influence the individual; the macrosystem, which covers cultural values and social norms; and the chronosystem, which reflects changes over time. Through this theory, educational experiences and teacher behavior are understood as outcomes of both individual and contextual influences.

Recent educational studies have used Ecological Systems Theory to analyze the complex factors that influence teachers' practices, preparedness, and inclusive education implementation. Almughyiri (2025), for example, found that institutional support, community values, and professional development opportunities influence teacher attitudes and readiness for inclusive practice. Likewise, Yang and Zhou (2025) showed that school climate and teacher efficacy are connected, particularly when the school environment provides support that strengthens teacher confidence and engagement. These studies demonstrate that Ecological Systems Theory is useful in examining the multiple environmental layers that shape teacher behavior and inclusive classroom practices.

Ecological Systems Theory is relevant to the present study because it emphasizes that teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and preparedness are influenced not only by personal characteristics but also by the wider environment in which they work. Classroom practices, which belong to the microsystem, are affected by school policies, administrative support, available resources, professional development, community expectations, and cultural views about inclusion. By recognizing these interacting systems, the theory supports the study's focus on how teacher readiness is shaped by both individual and institutional factors. It also provides a basis for designing an enhancement program that addresses teacher competencies as well as school-level supports that can strengthen inclusive education practices.

Taken together, the Theory of Planned Behavior, Social Cognitive Theory, and Ecological Systems Theory provide a comprehensive theoretical foundation for this study. The Theory of Planned Behavior explains how teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward inclusive education influence their intention and willingness to support learners with special needs. Social Cognitive Theory expands this understanding by emphasizing the role of self-efficacy, confidence, and personal beliefs in shaping preparedness and instructional behavior. Ecological Systems Theory situates these individual factors within broader environmental systems, including classroom conditions, school support, professional development, policy implementation, and community expectations.

These theories collectively suggest that teacher preparedness is not determined by one factor alone. Instead, it develops from the interaction of internal factors, such as beliefs, attitudes, confidence, and perceived competence, and external factors, such as training, administrative support, instructional resources, and institutional policies. In the conceptual framework of this study, teachers' perceptions and attitudes are treated as important variables that may significantly relate to their preparedness in managing learners with special needs. The three theories therefore support the examination of the relationship between teachers' perceptions and preparedness, as well as between their attitudes and preparedness. They also justify the development of an enhancement program that addresses both teacher-level needs, including knowledge, confidence, and instructional strategies, and school-level mechanisms, such as professional development, inclusive resources, and collaborative practices.

The theoretical foundation of the study is also strengthened by Philippine legal mandates that promote inclusive, equitable, and competency-based education. Republic Act No. 10533 supports learner-centered and responsive basic education. Republic Act No. 7277 protects the rights of persons with disabilities, including their right to education. Republic Act No. 11650 strengthens inclusive education and services for learners with disabilities. Republic Act No. 10968 supports competency development and lifelong learning among professionals, including teachers. Collectively, these legal bases reinforce the importance of assessing and improving teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and preparedness in managing learners with special needs in inclusive classrooms.

Republic Act No. 10533, known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, seeks to strengthen the Philippine basic education system by making it more responsive, learner-centered, and inclusive. The law extends basic education and promotes a curriculum that addresses the academic, physical, social, and emotional development of learners, including those with special needs. It also encourages flexible, participatory, and developmentally appropriate teaching



approaches that respond to learners' abilities and circumstances. Moreover, the law highlights the importance of teacher training and continuing professional development as essential components of quality basic education.

RA 10533 is relevant to the present study because it emphasizes that inclusive education depends not only on curriculum reforms but also on teachers' ability to implement learner-centered and responsive teaching practices. The law supports the study's focus on teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and preparedness because these factors affect how inclusive strategies are carried out in actual classrooms. Its emphasis on professional development also aligns with the study's concern for teacher training, pedagogical competence, and classroom readiness. As a legal basis, RA 10533 strengthens the rationale for examining how teachers' mindset and preparedness influence their ability to manage learners with special needs effectively.

Republic Act No. 10968, also known as the Philippine Qualifications Framework Act, institutionalizes the Philippine Qualifications Framework to promote quality-assured qualifications, competency standards, lifelong learning, and alignment between education, training, and professional practice. Although the law does not focus solely on inclusive education, it is relevant because teachers handling inclusive classrooms need continuous competency development to respond to diverse learner needs. The law supports the upgrading of professional knowledge, skills, and qualifications through training, continuing education, and competency-based development.

In relation to the present study, RA 10968 strengthens the legal foundation for examining teacher preparedness in inclusive education. Preparedness involves more than teaching experience; it also includes pedagogical knowledge, classroom management skills, professional development, and the ability to apply appropriate instructional strategies for learners with special needs. By emphasizing lifelong learning and competency standards, the law supports the creation of enhancement programs that help teachers improve their professional capacity. Thus, RA 10968 connects to the study by reinforcing the need for continuous teacher development and competency-based preparation for inclusive classroom practice.

Republic Act No. 7277, or the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, was enacted in 1992 to protect and promote the rights and welfare of persons with disabilities in the Philippines. The law guarantees access to education, employment, health services, and social services, while requiring the provision of programs and support systems that enable persons with disabilities to participate meaningfully in society. In education, RA 7277 emphasizes that learners with disabilities should be given appropriate educational opportunities, including access to inclusive programs in mainstream schools. It also supports the provision of accommodations, support services, and specialized teaching approaches that respond to the learning needs of students with disabilities.

This law is directly related to the present study because it provides a rights-based legal foundation for investigating teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and preparedness in managing learners with special needs. By requiring educational access and appropriate support for learners with disabilities, RA 7277 highlights the important role of teachers in creating inclusive and equitable learning environments. It also aligns with Social Cognitive Theory, as both emphasize the influence of teacher beliefs, confidence, and environmental supports on instructional behavior. Furthermore, the law supports the study's focus on teacher preparedness, including pedagogical knowledge, professional development, and instructional strategies, as essential factors in the effective implementation of inclusive practices.

Republic Act No. 11650, known as the Instituting a Policy of Inclusion and Services for Learners with Disabilities in Support of Inclusive Education Act, was enacted in 2022 to strengthen inclusive education in the Philippines. The law ensures that learners with disabilities are given equitable access to quality education through appropriate support services, learning resources, reasonable accommodations, and inclusive learning environments. It also stresses the need for teacher training and professional development to help educators respond to the diverse needs of learners with disabilities.

RA 11650 is highly relevant to this study because it directly recognizes the crucial role of teachers in implementing inclusive education. The law supports the need to assess teachers' perspectives, attitudes, and preparedness, particularly in relation to pedagogical knowledge, classroom environment, instructional strategies, and professional development. It also provides a strong legal foundation for developing enhancement programs that strengthen teacher competence and promote effective inclusive classroom practices. Through this law, the study is further justified as it



seeks to generate evidence that may help improve teachers' readiness to manage learners with special needs in inclusive classrooms.

Methodology

This section discusses the methods and procedures used in the conduct of the study. It includes the research design, research environment, respondents, research instrument, data gathering procedures, ethical considerations, data treatment, and scoring procedure.

Design

This study utilized a descriptive-quantitative research design with a correlational approach to investigate teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and preparedness in managing learners with special needs in inclusive classrooms in the Canlaon City Division for School Year 2025–2026. McBurney and White (2009) explained that descriptive-correlational research is suitable for describing existing conditions and determining the relationships among variables as they occur naturally in real-life educational settings.

The descriptive component of the study focused on identifying the profile of the teacher-respondents according to age, sex, highest educational attainment, years of experience in handling learners with special needs, and number of relevant trainings attended in special needs education. It also described the extent of teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and preparedness toward inclusive education based on specific indicators.

Teachers' perceptions were assessed in terms of inclusive understanding, learner beliefs, perceived benefits of inclusion, and perceived challenges in inclusion. Their attitudes were examined through inclusive openness, instructional willingness, teaching confidence, and professional commitment. Meanwhile, their preparedness was measured in relation to pedagogical knowledge, professional development, classroom environment, and instructional strategies. These dimensions provided a clear and organized basis for determining teachers' readiness to manage learners with special needs in inclusive classroom settings.

The correlational aspect of the study determined the significant relationship between teachers' perceptions and preparedness, as well as between teachers' attitudes and preparedness in managing learners with special needs. Through this approach, the researcher was able to examine how differences in teachers' perceptions and attitudes were associated with their level of preparedness without manipulating any variable.

The descriptive-correlational design was appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to systematically examine existing conditions and relationships among variables within inclusive education contexts (Clarete et al., 2023). The study did not seek to determine cause-and-effect relationships or test an intervention. Instead, it aimed to describe and analyze the associations among teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and preparedness. This design also enabled the objective analysis of data while maintaining the natural context of teachers' classroom experiences (Almuaili, 2023).

Flow of the Study

The study followed a systematic process in examining teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and preparedness in managing learners with special needs in inclusive classrooms in the Canlaon City Division. The process began with the collection of respondents' demographic information, including age, sex, highest educational attainment, years of experience in handling learners with special needs, and number of relevant trainings attended in special needs education. This phase established the background profile of the respondents and provided context for understanding their professional experiences.

After identifying the respondents' profile, the study proceeded to determine the levels of teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and preparedness in managing learners with special needs. Teachers' perceptions were examined based on inclusive understanding, learner beliefs, perceived benefits of inclusion, and perceived challenges in inclusion. Their attitudes were assessed according to inclusive openness, instructional willingness, teaching confidence, and



professional commitment. Teachers' preparedness was then evaluated in terms of pedagogical knowledge, professional development, classroom environment, and instructional strategies. Data on these variables were gathered using a structured survey questionnaire administered to the selected teacher-respondents.

The next phase involved examining the relationships between teachers' perceptions and preparedness, and between teachers' attitudes and preparedness in inclusive classroom settings. The gathered data were organized, tabulated, and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools to determine patterns, levels, and significant relationships among the variables. The results were then interpreted in relation to the objectives and research questions of the study.

Based on the findings, conclusions were drawn to answer the problems of the study. These conclusions served as the foundation for the development of a proposed enhancement program designed to strengthen teachers' competence, confidence, and readiness in managing learners with special needs in inclusive classrooms.

Environment

The study was conducted in the Canlaon City Division, Negros Oriental, Philippines, specifically in two purposively selected public elementary schools situated in the urban area of Canlaon City. These schools were Macario Española Memorial School in Barangay Mabigo and Panubigan Central Elementary School in Barangay Panubigan.

The schools were chosen because they satisfied the established criteria for the study. First, both schools had learners with special needs enrolled in mainstream classroom settings. Second, they had teachers who were directly engaged in handling learners with special needs in inclusive classrooms. Third, both schools were implementing inclusive education practices, making them appropriate settings for examining teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and preparedness. Since the study focused on teachers with actual exposure to inclusive classroom instruction, only schools that met these requirements were included.

The urban setting of the selected schools also provided an important context for the study. Public schools located in urban areas may have better access to instructional resources, professional development activities, administrative assistance, and support or referral services compared with schools in more geographically isolated communities. However, they may also experience challenges such as larger class sizes, greater learner diversity, and higher expectations for the implementation of inclusive education programs. These conditions may affect teachers' understanding of inclusive education, their responses to learners with special needs, and their level of readiness in managing inclusive classrooms.

Thus, Macario Española Memorial School and Panubigan Central Elementary School served as suitable research environments because they represented public elementary schools in the Canlaon City Division where inclusive education was already being practiced in actual classroom situations. Their inclusion enabled the study to gather relevant insights from teachers who had direct experience in teaching and supporting learners with special needs in inclusive learning environments.

Respondents

The respondents of the study were teachers who handled inclusive classrooms in selected public schools within the Canlaon City Division, Negros Oriental. Their responses served as an important source of data in determining their perceptions, attitudes, and preparedness in managing learners with special needs in inclusive classroom settings.

The study used purposive sampling in selecting the respondents. This method was appropriate because the study required participants who had direct experience in teaching learners with special needs in inclusive classrooms. Since not all teachers in the division were assigned to inclusive education settings, the respondents were intentionally chosen based on their actual involvement in inclusive classroom instruction. Through purposive sampling, the researcher was able to gather relevant and meaningful information from teachers who were familiar with and directly exposed to the inclusive education practices being investigated.



Specifically, the study focused on two public schools in Canlaon City that had active implementation of inclusive education and enrolled learners with special needs: Macario Española Memorial School and Panubigan Central Elementary School. The respondents were composed of SPED teachers and receiving or general education teachers who were currently teaching learners with special needs. To be included in the study, the participants had to be actively involved in inclusive education practices, have at least one year of teaching experience with learners with special needs, and be willing to provide truthful and informed responses to the research instrument.

The largest proportion of teacher-respondents came from Macario Española Memorial School, accounting for 83.33% of the total. A smaller proportion of respondents came from Panubigan Central Elementary School with 16.67%. In total, thirty (30) teachers participated in the study, providing a diverse and representative sample of teachers from both central schools within the Canlaon City Division.

Instrument

The main instrument used in this study was an adapted survey questionnaire intended to collect data on teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and preparedness in managing learners with special needs in inclusive classroom settings. The questionnaire was developed based on established and research-supported sources to ensure that its items were aligned with the variables of the study and the principles of inclusive education. Specifically, the items on teachers' preparedness were adapted from Cola et al. (2025), while the items on teachers' perceptions were based on Sharma et al. (2012). The items measuring teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education were adapted from the framework of Loreman et al. (2007).

The questionnaire consisted of four main parts. The first part gathered the demographic profile of the teacher-respondents, including their age, sex, highest educational attainment, years of teaching experience, and number of relevant trainings attended in special needs education. The second part measured teachers' perceptions in managing learners with special needs in inclusive classrooms, specifically in terms of inclusive understanding, learner beliefs, perceived benefits of inclusion, and perceived challenges in inclusion.

The third part focused on teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education, which were examined through inclusive openness, instructional willingness, teaching confidence, and professional commitment. The fourth part assessed teachers' preparedness based on pedagogical knowledge, professional development, classroom environment, and instructional strategies.

All items in the questionnaire were presented using a five-point Likert scale, allowing the respondents to indicate their level of agreement with each statement. A copy of the research instrument is provided in Appendix C.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher followed a systematic three-stage procedure in collecting the data needed for the study, namely the Preliminary Stage, Data Gathering Stage, and Post-Data Gathering Stage. These stages were observed to ensure that the data collection process was properly authorized, organized, ethical, and consistent with the requirements of the study.

Preliminary Stage. During the preliminary stage, the researcher secured the necessary permissions and approvals before conducting the study. A formal request to conduct the study was submitted to the concerned authorities, including the Schools Division Superintendent of Canlaon City, the school principals, and other relevant offices. The researcher complied with the research protocols and requirements of the Schools Division Office and the participating schools.

After the required approvals were obtained, the researcher coordinated with the school administrators and concerned teachers regarding the conduct of the study. The teacher-respondents who met the established inclusion criteria were identified in coordination with the appropriate school personnel. The researcher also arranged the schedule and venue for the administration of the survey questionnaire to ensure that the data collection would not disrupt the regular school activities.



Before the administration of the instrument, the respondents were informed about the purpose and significance of the study, the procedures involved, and the nature of their participation. They were also informed that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to decline participation or withdraw from the study. The confidentiality and privacy of the information they provided were also explained to them. The researcher ensured that the necessary informed consent and other ethical requirements were accomplished before proceeding with the actual data gathering.

Data Gathering Stage. During the data gathering stage, the validated survey questionnaire was administered to the selected teacher-respondents. Before they answered the instrument, the researcher provided clear instructions regarding the proper way of completing the questionnaire. The respondents were given sufficient time to read and answer each item based on their actual experiences and perceptions.

The administration of the questionnaire was conducted in a suitable and distraction-free setting within the school premises to allow the respondents to answer the instrument comfortably and thoughtfully. The researcher was present during the administration to address questions and provide clarification regarding the instructions or items without influencing the respondents' answers.

After the respondents completed the questionnaire, the researcher personally retrieved the accomplished instruments. Each questionnaire was checked for completeness to determine whether all required items had been answered. The researcher ensured that the identities of the respondents were not unnecessarily disclosed and that the accomplished questionnaires were handled securely.

Post-Data Gathering Stage. During the post-data gathering stage, the researcher reviewed the retrieved questionnaires for completeness, consistency, and accuracy. The accomplished questionnaires were then organized and assigned appropriate codes for data processing. The responses were encoded into a data file and prepared for statistical analysis.

The researcher carefully checked the encoded data against the accomplished questionnaires to minimize encoding errors. After the data had been verified, the researcher subjected them to the appropriate statistical treatment based on the research questions and objectives of the study. The results were then organized and interpreted in accordance with the established statistical procedures.

Throughout the entire process, the researcher maintained the confidentiality and security of the collected information. The data were used solely for the purposes of the study and were handled in accordance with applicable research ethics and institutional requirements. Through these three stages, the data gathering process was conducted in an orderly, ethical, and systematic manner while respecting the rights, privacy, and welfare of the teacher-respondents.

Ethical Considerations

In the conduct of this study, ethical principles were strictly observed to safeguard the rights, welfare, privacy, and dignity of the teacher-respondents and to uphold the integrity of the research process. Before the respondents participated in the study, informed consent was obtained. A letter attached to the survey questionnaire explained the purpose of the study, the nature and extent of participation, and the rights of the respondents. It clearly stated that participation was voluntary and that the respondents had the right to refuse to answer any item or withdraw from the study at any point without fear of penalty or negative consequence. Only respondents who gave their consent were allowed to answer the questionnaire.

The confidentiality and privacy of the respondents were carefully protected throughout the study. To maintain anonymity, no personal identifiers, such as names, contact numbers, or other identifying information, were collected. All responses were stored in a secure electronic folder protected by a password and accessible only to the researcher. The raw data were kept in this secured storage before and during the analysis. After the analysis and completion of the study, the electronic files were archived in a separate password-protected folder and retained only for the period required for verification. After such period, the files were permanently deleted to prevent unauthorized access, misuse, or data breach.



The survey questionnaire was prepared in a manner that was respectful, non-intrusive, and considerate of the respondents' comfort. The items were designed to avoid causing harm, pressure, or discomfort during participation. The researcher also ensured that the study was carried out with honesty, transparency, and academic integrity. All data and findings were reported accurately, objectively, and responsibly.

Furthermore, the study complied with Republic Act No. 10173, also known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012, which governs the collection, processing, storage, protection, and disposal of personal information. In accordance with this law, only the data necessary to achieve the objectives of the study were gathered, and no personally identifiable information was collected. The processing of data was limited strictly to academic and research purposes. Appropriate technical and organizational safeguards, such as password-protected files and restricted access, were implemented to protect the data from unauthorized use, disclosure, loss, or breach. By observing the principles of transparency, legitimate purpose, and proportionality under the Data Privacy Act, the study ensured that all responses were handled responsibly, securely, and ethically from data collection to data disposal.

Statistical Treatment of Data

To ensure that the results of the study were accurate, reliable, and meaningful, the data gathered from the survey questionnaires were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The following statistical tools were utilized in the study:

Frequency. This was used to determine the number of teacher-respondents belonging to each category of the demographic profile. This statistical tool was applied to variables such as age, sex, highest educational attainment, years of teaching experience, and number of relevant trainings attended in special needs education. Through frequency counts, the researcher was able to determine the distribution of respondents across the different profile categories.

Percentage. This was used to show the proportion of respondents in each category in relation to the total number of respondents. This helped present the demographic profile of the teacher-respondents in a clearer and more organized manner. It was particularly useful in illustrating the distribution of respondents according to their personal and professional characteristics.

Mean. This was used to determine the average responses of the teacher-respondents regarding their perceptions, attitudes, and preparedness in managing learners with special needs in inclusive classrooms. This measure of central tendency helped identify the general level of agreement of the respondents for each statement or indicator.

Weighted Mean. This was used to interpret the responses obtained from the five-point Likert-scale questionnaire. It was applied to determine the overall level of teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and preparedness across the different dimensions of the study. These dimensions included inclusive understanding, learner beliefs, inclusion benefits, inclusion challenges, inclusive openness, instructional willingness, teaching confidence, professional commitment, pedagogical knowledge, professional development, classroom environment, and instructional strategies.

Standard Deviation. This was used to measure the extent of variation or dispersion of the respondents' answers from the mean. This statistical tool helped determine whether the responses were closely grouped or widely varied across the indicators. A lower standard deviation indicated more consistent responses, while a higher standard deviation suggested greater variability among the respondents' answers.

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson's r). This was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship among the major variables of the study. Specifically, it was used to test the relationship between teachers' perceptions and their preparedness, as well as between teachers' attitudes and their preparedness in managing learners with special needs in inclusive classroom settings. This statistical tool helped establish whether significant relationships existed among the variables being examined.

All statistical analyses were conducted at the 0.05 level of significance. The results of the analysis served as the basis for interpreting the findings, formulating conclusions, and developing recommendations for the proposed



enhancement program intended to strengthen teachers' preparedness in managing learners with special needs in inclusive classrooms.

Scoring Procedure

A standardized scoring procedure was used to interpret the data obtained from the survey questionnaires. The responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, which allowed the respondents to indicate their level of agreement with each statement. The response options ranged from Strongly Disagree, assigned a value of 1, to Strongly Agree, assigned a value of 5.

The numerical values corresponding to the respondents' answers were used to compute the mean scores for each component of the questionnaire. These mean scores served as the basis for interpreting the level of teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and preparedness in managing learners with special needs in inclusive classroom settings.

The questionnaire was composed of two major parts. The first part gathered the demographic profile of the teacher-respondents, while the second part measured their perceptions, attitudes, and preparedness in relation to inclusive education. Through this scoring procedure, the researcher was able to analyze the responses in a systematic and consistent manner.

Results and Discussion

The section presents the findings of a study on teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and preparedness in managing learners with special needs in inclusive classrooms in the Canlaon City Division for School Year 2025–2026. It examines the respondents' demographic profiles, their views and attitudes toward inclusive education, their preparedness, and the relationships between these variables.

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The study involved 30 teacher-respondents with the following characteristics:

- **Age:** Most respondents were aged 31–40 years (56.67%), followed by those aged 41–50 (33.33%).
- **Sex:** The majority were female (70%), while 30% were male.
- **Educational attainment:** The largest group had earned master's units (46.67%). Twenty percent had completed a master's degree, another 20% held bachelor's degrees, and the remaining respondents had doctoral units or degrees.
- **Teaching experience:** The largest group had 5–9 years of teaching experience (26.67%), although respondents represented various career stages.
- **Relevant training:** The largest group (36.67%) had not attended any training related to special needs education. Only 6.67% had attended 10 or more training sessions.

Although many teachers have teaching experience and some graduate-level education, the lack of specialized training among a considerable proportion of respondents highlights the need for more comprehensive professional development in inclusive education.

Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusive Education

Teachers demonstrated an overall Very Positive level of perception, with a grand mean of 4.45.

Dimension	Mean	Interpretation
Inclusion challenges	4.55	Very Positive
Inclusion benefits	4.50	Very Positive
Learner beliefs	4.42	Very Positive
Inclusive understanding	4.32	Very Positive
Overall	4.45	Very Positive

The findings indicate that teachers:

- Understand the fundamental concepts, goals, and rights associated with inclusive education.



- Believe that learners with special needs can learn, participate, and develop academically and socially with appropriate support.
- Recognize the benefits of inclusion, particularly acceptance, reduced discrimination, social relationships, and cooperation.
- Are aware of practical challenges, including large class sizes, limited resources, time constraints, diverse learning needs, and insufficient specialized support.

Teachers generally support inclusive education and recognize its value. However, positive perceptions must be accompanied by practical training, adequate resources, and institutional support to ensure effective classroom implementation.

Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education

Teachers exhibited an overall Positive attitude, with a grand mean of 4.16.

Dimension	Mean	Interpretation
Professional commitment	4.35	Very Positive
Instructional willingness	4.28	Very Positive
Inclusive openness	4.18	Positive
Teaching confidence	3.83	Positive
Overall	4.16	Positive

The findings reveal that teachers are committed to supporting inclusive education, willing to improve their teaching practices, and receptive to collaboration and professional development. They also recognize their responsibility to treat learners fairly and provide equitable learning opportunities. However, teaching confidence received the lowest mean. Some teachers may still lack confidence in teaching learners with special needs, communicating with them, managing behavioral concerns, and applying specialized inclusive teaching strategies. Teachers demonstrate a willingness to support inclusion, but their commitment and positive attitudes need to be reinforced through practical experience, mentoring, specialized training, and sustained professional support.

Teachers' Preparedness for Inclusive Education

Teachers were generally assessed as Prepared, obtaining an overall grand mean of 3.70.

Dimension	Mean	Interpretation
Instructional strategies	4.04	Prepared
Professional development	3.64	Prepared
Classroom environment	3.57	Prepared
Pedagogical knowledge	3.54	Prepared
Overall	3.70	Prepared

The results indicate that teachers possess foundational knowledge and skills for managing learners with special needs. Their strongest area was instructional strategies, particularly collaboration between regular and special education teachers. Respondents also recognized the importance of professional development and support from colleagues and administrators.

Nevertheless, several areas require improvement:

- Pedagogical knowledge: Teachers need deeper understanding of specific learning needs, differentiated instruction, behavioral support, and individualized interventions.
- Professional development: More specialized training is needed, particularly in preparing and implementing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).
- Classroom environment: Access to instructional materials, assistive devices, ICT resources, appropriate classroom arrangements, and accommodations remains an area for improvement.
- Instructional strategies: Additional preparation may be necessary for handling complex behavioral and emotional concerns.



Teachers have a basic level of preparedness, but continuous professional development, improved resources, collaborative practices, and administrative support are necessary to strengthen their competence.

Relationship Between Teachers' Perceptions and Preparedness

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a moderate, positive, and statistically significant relationship between teachers' perceptions and preparedness.

- Pearson's $(r = 0.503)$
- $(p = 0.005)$
- Significance level: 0.05
- Decision: Reject the null hypothesis.

This means that more favorable and informed perceptions of inclusive education are associated with higher levels of teacher preparedness. Teachers who understand and value inclusion may be more motivated to participate in professional development, explore appropriate instructional strategies, and improve their classroom practices. Strengthening teachers' perceptions through awareness programs, training, mentoring, and exposure to inclusive classroom practices may contribute to improved preparedness.

Relationship Between Teachers' Attitudes and Preparedness

The second Pearson correlation analysis also revealed a moderate, positive, and statistically significant relationship between teachers' attitudes and preparedness.

- Pearson's $(r = 0.528)$
- $(p = 0.003)$
- Significance level: 0.05
- Decision: Reject the null hypothesis.

This finding indicates that teachers with more favorable attitudes toward inclusive education tend to demonstrate higher preparedness. Openness, instructional willingness, teaching confidence, and professional commitment are associated with their readiness to manage learners with special needs. Improving teachers' attitudes through professional development, collaborative practices, positive exposure to inclusion, and reflective activities may help strengthen their preparedness.

Conclusion

The study reveals that teachers generally possess very positive perceptions, positive attitudes, and adequate preparedness for managing learners with special needs in inclusive classrooms. However, the findings identify a gap between teachers' willingness to support inclusion and their practical confidence and competence in implementing it. Although teachers recognize the benefits of inclusive education and demonstrate commitment to supporting diverse learners, limited specialized training, insufficient resources, and challenges in managing complex learning needs may affect implementation. The statistically significant relationships between perceptions and preparedness, as well as attitudes and preparedness, further emphasize the importance of strengthening teachers' understanding and dispositions toward inclusion.

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that teachers in the Canlaon City Division generally possess very positive perceptions, positive attitudes, and adequate preparedness in managing learners with special needs in inclusive classrooms. The results also show that teachers' perceptions and attitudes are significantly related to their preparedness. This means that teachers who have more favorable perceptions and attitudes toward inclusive education tend to demonstrate higher levels of readiness in supporting learners with special needs.

The study further concludes that strengthening teachers' understanding of inclusion, improving their attitudes, building their confidence, and enhancing their professional competencies may contribute to more effective inclusive classroom management. Although teachers are generally prepared, continued support remains necessary to address gaps in specialized training, instructional resources, classroom accommodations, and practical skills for handling diverse learner needs.



Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, schools may strengthen continuous professional development programs focused on inclusive education and special needs education. Teachers may also be provided with training, mentoring, and peer coaching to improve their confidence in managing learners with special needs. School administrators may improve the availability of instructional materials, assistive tools, and classroom resources that support inclusive education. In addition, collaboration among teachers, SPED teachers, parents, and school administrators may be strengthened to provide better support for learners with special needs. Future researchers may conduct similar studies involving a larger number of schools and respondents to further validate the findings. Finally, the proposed enhancement program may be considered for implementation to strengthen teachers' preparedness in managing learners with special needs in inclusive classrooms.

Develop an enhancement program for inclusive education that prioritizes:

1. Specialized training in differentiated instruction, classroom management, behavior support, and IEP implementation.
2. Hands-on learning, mentoring, coaching, and collaborative planning between regular and special education teachers.
3. Improved access to instructional materials, assistive technology, specialized assessments, and appropriate classroom accommodations.
4. Stronger administrative support and partnerships among teachers, parents, specialists, and the school community.
5. Continuous assessment of teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and preparedness to identify further professional development needs.

The ultimate goal is to help teachers translate their positive perceptions and commitment into effective classroom practices that promote accessibility, participation, equity, and meaningful learning opportunities for all learners.

Teachers in the Canlaon City Division generally support inclusive education and are adequately prepared to implement it, but strengthening their specialized knowledge, teaching confidence, professional training, and access to resources is essential for more effective inclusive classroom management.

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