



Challenges Encountered by Teachers Without SPED Training: A Basis for Teachers' Basic Training in Special Education

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Abstract:

The general purpose of this study was to determine the extent of challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training in Sagay National High School, Division of Sagay City, Philippines. Thirty (30) regular teachers served as the respondents of this study through purposive sampling technique. A quantitative descriptive research design was utilized to determine the extent of challenges encountered by teachers. This study used a researcher-made survey questionnaire and was administered to the participants. Mean was used to determine the extent of challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training when grouped according to age, length of years in service, and sex. Independent Sample T-test was utilized to determine the significant difference in the extent of challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training when grouped according to sex and ANOVA when grouped according to age and length of years in service. Results of this study revealed that in terms of age, teachers aged 36 – 40 were more challenged than other age groups. In terms of length of years in service, teachers who were 4 – 10 years in service were found to be more challenged than those who were in 0 – 3 years and over 10 years in service. It was also found that male teachers were more challenged in handling students with special needs than female teachers. It was also revealed that there was no significant difference in the extent of challenges encountered by teachers in terms of age and length of years in service, but there was a significant difference in terms of sex. The study recommended that teachers need to undergo training in Special Education to address the extent of challenges they encountered in handling students with special needs.

Keywords: *teachers' challenges, SPED training, Special Education, students with special needs*

Introduction:

Background of the Study

Philippine education has already shifted and adapted to inclusive education wherein students, regardless of challenges or disabilities they may have, gain access to the general education classroom. Every Filipino child must have access to education that provides a high-quality, inclusive, and relevant curriculum, regardless of their circumstances (UNICEF, 2016). The goal of inclusive education is to mainstream special needs students in a flexible learning environment so they can receive a high-quality education that maximizes their chance for overall growth.

This objective depends on teachers who can promote inclusivity in the educational system by instilling good morals, imparting knowledge, and enhancing the abilities of gifted students to deal with challenges in life. By providing students with special needs with a quality education in a flexible learning environment, teachers play a crucial part in achieving successful and sustained inclusive education (Dela Fuente, 2021).

The implementation of inclusive education was lengthy and was never easy. There is increasing demand to enrich knowledge in existing educational programs to equip teachers with relevant skills and teaching-learning knowledge to provide quality education for all (Dorji, 2020). The inclusion of disabled students in a common class has always been challenging (Nishan, 2018).

Sagay National High School, the largest secondary school at the heart of Sagay City has been opening its door to learners with special needs. As a result, its population is gradually increasing each year. One of the challenges that teachers who handle students with special educational needs was that they are not equipped with basic training that would help them provide the kind of educational support that they deserved. The researcher believed that basic training and seminars in special education can help receiving teachers overcome challenges in dealing with those types of learners.

In line with this, the researcher was motivated to determine the extent of challenges encountered by receiving teachers in Sagay National High School. The result of this study may serve as a basis for the school administrators in providing basic training and seminars for the said teachers.

Objectives of the Study



This study aimed to determine extent of challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of teachers without SPED training in terms of
 - a. Age;
 - b. Length of Years in Service; and
 - c. Sex?
2. What is the extent of these challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training when taken as a whole and grouped according to
 - a. Age;
 - b. Length of Years in Service; and
 - c. Sex?
3. Is there a significant difference on the extent of challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training when grouped according to:
 - a. Age;
 - b. Length of Years in Service; and
 - c. Sex?

Theoretical Underpinnings

Philippine education has already shifted and adapted to inclusive education wherein students, despite the difficulties or challenges they may have, will gain access to the general education classroom that is least restrictive. In the least restrictive environment, general education teachers will handle students who need more educational support in the regular classroom setup. In delivering lessons to these students, teachers encountered different challenges. This study focuses on the challenges encountered by regular teachers without SPED training.

John Dewey's Experiential Learning Theory states that knowledge is a product of experiences and is constructed with the help of interaction with society. This data must be organized in relation to pertinent real-world situations. The teacher is in charge of organizing this material and facilitating the practical experiences. The experiences are determined by the learners' aptitude and readiness. Dewey also stated that it was the teacher's duty to be aware of each student's intellectual level and present challenging problems for them to solve.

"Those who can, do. Those who understand, teach", Shulman (2016); that reflects the importance of the teacher being equipped and being able to carry out the topic based on how well he knows the lesson. Hence, the purpose of this research is to determine the challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training, which will serve as a basis for future training.

Literature Review:

Inclusive Education

In inclusive education, regardless of whatever challenges they may encounter, all children are enrolled in age-appropriate general education classes at their neighborhood public schools, where they get excellent instruction, supports, and interventions to help them achieve in the core subjects. The fundamental competency of students with disabilities and students without disabilities is assumed to be equal, which underpins how the school and classroom operate. In general education, which is the placement of first choice for all pupils, they are as much as possible among their classmates without disabilities. Accepting, comprehending, and addressing student variety and differences, which might include physical, cognitive, academic, social, and emotional issues, is the key to successful inclusive education. The guiding philosophy is to provide a welcoming environment where each student feels suitably challenged and encouraged in their endeavors. The support of the adults is also of utmost importance. This includes the regular education teacher, the special education teacher, and all other staff and faculty who are significant stakeholders (McManis, 2021).

Inclusive Education in the Philippines

In conjunction with its implementation of IE, the Philippine Department of Education produced Department Order No. 72, s.2009, outlining three options for program placement: full inclusion, partial inclusion, and self-contained in Special Education. However, issues including lax enforcement, a lack of political commitment, insufficient funding, and fragmented service delivery made it difficult for it to be fully implemented locally (Dela Fuente, 2021).

General Education Teachers' Perception of Inclusive Education

Most special education teachers have knowledge of working with students who have disabilities or impairments. Due to a lack of resources, support, and training, general education teachers might not be able to address the specific needs of children with disabilities. Teachers of general education may become concerned, anxious, and have unfavorable perceptions of inclusion and students with disabilities as a result of a lack of training and support. Researchers have not looked at general education teachers' opinions or how to effectively meet the



requirements of the class's students, despite the fact that serving kids with emotional behavior impairments in the general education classroom has been addressed by scholars. Administrators are left to organize support on their own to assist teachers with methods in the inclusive classroom due to the information gap (Patton, 2020).

Challenges Encountered by Teachers on Inclusive Education

Although many schools are attempting to create classrooms that are inclusive of students with special needs, there are still a number of problems that need to be resolved. Making inclusive classrooms for students with special needs a success begins with making sure that instructors are well-trained and prepared (Ramos, 2022).

Coping Mechanisms of Regular Teachers Teaching SPED

Given that teachers must manage classrooms, plan lessons, prepare for classes, evaluate students, and manage resources, teaching is seen as a tough and difficult career. Additionally, while working with students who have learning issues, instructors are the main point of contact for relationships with parents, their own and other students, and other faculty members. The actions, opinions, and general job happiness of those who work as teachers are impacted by the stress of the profession. There are numerous coping mechanisms that special needs and general classroom instructors can employ to reduce stress at school (Kebbi & Al-Hroub, 2018).

Importance of Effective Teacher Training

Learning a series of preprogrammed behaviors is the process of training. Every training includes some education, and every education includes some training. Education and development are intricately interwoven. Application of knowledge is training (Sangurde, 2019).

Research Methodology:

The research design, the research participants or respondents, the research instrument, instrument validation, the data gathering procedure, the analysis of the data, and the statistical treatment of the data are all thoroughly described in this section.

Research Design

The quantitative descriptive research design was employed in this study to determine the extent of challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training when taken as a whole and when grouped according to age, length of years in service, and sex. Likewise, the said design was appropriate for this study to determine the significant differences on the extent of challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training when grouped according to age, length of years in service, and sex. In finding the extent of challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training, descriptive analysis was used. For significant differences, inferential analysis was used.

Respondents of the Study

The focus of the quantitative descriptive research was to determine the extent of challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training in Sagay National High School. Purposive sampling was used in identifying the participants of the study. To determine the extent of challenges encountered, a total of thirty (30) teachers from the Junior and Senior High School departments of the said school who handles or caters students with special needs in a regular classroom setup. Some inclusion criteria were set to obtain relevant data. The survey items were made simple for the participants to complete because of this qualification, which made sure they understood the survey questionnaire's purpose and nature.

Inclusion Criteria

- o Teachers without SPED training who handles students with special needs
- o Teachers aged under 25 to over 55 years old
- o Teachers of Sagay National High School
- o Teachers who have given their consent to be participants of the study.

Research Instruments

A researcher-made survey questionnaire was used as the main tool or instrument in collecting data for this study. The demographic profile and survey questionnaire are the two main sections of the data-gathering instrument. The demographic profile includes the respondents' names (optional), ages, sex, and length of years in service). The survey proper explores the challenges encountered by the respondents. This instrument was subjected to content validation using Good and Scates method. To establish the reliability of the instrument, it was administered to 30 participants. These participants were not included in the actual data gathering. The results were then analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha.



Validity and Reliability

For the validation of the research instrument, the researcher presented and asked the opinion of validators who were considered experts in their own field. After the experts reviewed the instrument, it was then validated using the rating presented by Douglas B. Scates and Carter V. Good. The evaluation tool used provides numerical ratings which resulted in a computed mean of 3.70, interpreted as "Very Good" which further means that the instrument is appropriate for its purpose in the study. Suggestions and comments were also considered for the improvement of the instruments.

In testing the reliability of the research instrument, pilot testing was conducted on other groups of teachers who have the same characteristics as the respondents. The result was then analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha. It obtained a reliability score of 0.914 which was interpreted as "Very Good". This further means that the instrument was reliable.

Data Gathering

Pre – Implementation

The researcher obtains the necessary measures and protocols regarding the conduct of the study. First, the researcher chose a topic of her interest. The main objectives and the specific questions are formulated to guide the researcher on the flow of the study. Next, the respondents of the study are identified and given a letter of consent. After the respondents were identified, the researcher proceeds in making a research questionnaire appropriate for the study. The validity and reliability of a questionnaire created by the researcher were then examined. The office of the principal or supervisor received a letter of authorization for the conduct of the study.

Implementation

The researcher gave the test questionnaire to the respondents after receiving permission to carry out the study. Instructions were given clearly so that reliable and honest responses can be acquired from respondents. Ethical considerations were given attention by the researcher. After the answering of test questionnaires by the respondents, the researcher retrieved them and sought the assistance of the statistician to treat and analyze the gathered data.

Post Implementation

The statistician made an appropriate and accurate statistical treatment of the data obtained. Each question on the statement of the problem was answered. After analyzing and interpreting the data, findings and results are revealed to the researcher. Conclusions were made based on the results. Recommendations were formulated in the conclusion section so that possible issues and concerns about the study are properly addressed.

Data Analysis

The following statistical tests were employed by the researcher in answering the different questions about the study.

For problem 1, frequency distribution and percentage were utilized to determine the demographic profile of the respondents.

For problem 2, the mean or the median was utilized to determine the extent of challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training when taken as a whole and when grouped according to age, length of years in service, and sex.

For problem 3, the Independent Sample T-test was utilized to determine the significant difference between the challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training when grouped according to sex (Male, Female). ANOVA was utilized to determine the significant difference on the extent of challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training when grouped according to age (Under 25 years old, 25 – 30 years old, 31 – 35 years old, 36 – 40 years old, 41 – 45 years old, 46 – 50 years old, 51 – 55 years old, Over 55 years old) and when grouped according to the number of years in service (0 to 3 years, 4 to 10 years, over 10 years). The same statistical test will be used.

The following scale was used to interpret the mean

Range of Mean and its corresponding Verbal Interpretation

Scale	Interpretation
4.20 – 5.00	Very High Extent
3.40 – 4.19	High Extent
2.60 – 3.39	Moderate Extent
1.80 – 2.59	Low Extent
1.00 – 1.79	Very Low Extent

Ethical Considerations

Ethical concerns are the guidelines that must be followed when conducting any kind of study. Ethics ensures that no one's rights are violated and that any research is conducted without having any additional goals. (Bhasin, 2020). Research ethics are essential for maintaining the integrity of science, upholding human rights and dignity, and fostering collaboration between science and society. These principles ensure that study participants' participation is



voluntary, informed, and secure (Bhandari, 2021). For that case, the researcher made considerations of ethical issues in this study at each stage.

To perform the study, a letter was delivered to the principal of the school. Before the data collection, the researcher explained clearly to the respondents the purpose of the study and the benefits that may result from their participation. The researcher made clear that the purpose of the study was only for academic purposes and wouldn't have any negative or positive impact to their jobs or daily lives. The respondent's demographic profile remains anonymous in the study and the information they provided was treated and kept confidential. The participants of this study were informed to participate voluntarily.

In addition, the respondents were assured that all written information would be deleted as soon as the report of the study was submitted. No one will have access to the information except the researcher and adviser if necessary. Lastly, the researcher asked all the respondents to freely affix their signature to the letter which contains that they agree to be one of the participants in the study.

Results and Discussion:

This section presents the results and discussion about challenges encountered by teachers without SPED Training after quantifying and analyzing the data gathered with the use of statistical tools. The discussions about the analyzed data and the table that corresponds to it are also presented to answer the objectives of the study.

Table 1
Percentage Distribution of Participants According to Sex, Age, and Length of Years in Service (n=30)

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	9	30
	Female	21	70
Age	25 – 30 years old	6	20
	31 – 35 years old	11	37
	36 – 40 years old	7	23
	41 – 45 years old	3	10
	46 – 50 years old	2	7
	51 – 55 years old	1	3
	0 – 3 years	1	3
Length of Years in Service	4 – 10 years	21	70
	Over 10 years	8	27

The Table showed the percentage distribution of participants according to sex, age, and length of years in service. There was a total of thirty respondents in the study. These participants were the regular educators who handle or cater students with special needs in a regular setup. These regular teachers have not undergone any training in Special Education.

As indicated in Table 1, nine (9) out of thirty (30) participants were males, which comprised 30% of the participants, while twenty-one (21) or 70% out of thirty (30) participants were females.

In terms of age, there were six (6) or 20% out of thirty (30) participants who aged 25 – 30 years old, eleven (11) or 37% out of thirty (30) participants aged 31 – 35 years old, seven (7) or 23% out of thirty (30) participants aged 36 – 40 years old, three (3) or 10% out of thirty (30) participants aged 41 – 45 years old, two (2) or 7% out of thirty (30) participants aged 46 – 50 years old and one (1) or 3% out of thirty (30) participants aged 51 – 55 years old.

In terms of length of years in service, one (1) or 3% out of the thirty (30) participants were 0 – 3 years in service, twenty-one (21) or 70% out of the thirty (30) participants were 4 – 10 years in service and eight (8) or 27% out of the thirty (30) participants were over 10 years in service.



Table 2
Extent of Challenges Encountered by Teachers without SPED Training

Variables		Mean	SD	Interpretation
AGE	25 – 30 years old	4.41	0.89	Very High Extent
	31 – 35 years old	4.16	0.75	High Extent
	36 – 40 years old	4.49	0.58	Very High Extent
	41 – 45 years old	4.16	0.78	High Extent
	46 – 50 years old	3.87	0.19	High Extent
	51 – 55 years old	2.53		Low Extent
LENGTH OF SERVICE	0 – 3 years	3.33		Moderate Extent
	4 – 10 years	4.31	0.72	Very High Extent
	Over 10 years	4.07	0.86	High Extent
SEX	Male	4.67	0.54	Very High Extent
	Female	4.01	0.76	High Extent

Table 2 showed the extent of challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training. In terms of age, participants aged 36 – 40 years old obtained the highest mean of 4.49 and a standard deviation of 0.58, which was understood as “Very High Extent”. This implies that these participants were more challenged when instructing students who have specific requirements than other age groups. Aside from not having any training in special education, they could have fewer favorable opinions or attitudes regarding the integration of students with special needs into the regular classroom setting. De los Santos (2021) concurred with this finding that older teachers have more favorable attitudes of the adoption of inclusive education and Mngo (2018) found that younger people had more favorable attitudes regarding including disabled pupils in regular classes.

In terms of length of years in service, it shows that participants who were on their 4 – 10 years in service obtained the highest mean of 4.31, which was interpreted as “Very High Extent”. This implies that these participants were more challenged than other participants who were on their 0 – 3 years in service and over 10 years in service in handling students with special needs. Participants in their 0 – 3 years and over 10 years in service also experienced these challenges but not that extent compared to participants in 4 – 10 years in service. This result concurred with the idea of Graham et al. (2020), that beginning teachers are doing as well or better than teachers with more years of experience.

In terms of sex, the Table shows that male participants got the highest mean of 4.67 and a standard deviation of 0.54, which was interpreted as “Very High Extent”. This implies that male participants were more challenged than female participants in handling students with special needs. This also means that in a general classroom setup, male teachers who do not have training in Special education find it hard to handle or deliver learning to students being included in their class. This result was in concordance with Ellins and Porter (2015) as cited in Duncara (2019), male teachers had recorded less tolerance for implementing inclusions and lower level of sympathy compared to female teachers. Thus, this may cause the extent of challenges male teachers encountered. Sympathy is crucial In order to provide a conducive learning atmosphere for students. Additionally, sympathy allows teachers



to better understand their students, which can help them provide more effective support (Yussif, 2022). Furthermore, having or instilling tolerance meant to make life in diversity harmonious. It is an attitude of respecting and respecting rights and differences (Alhadiq et al.,2020).

As a whole, male participants had the highest mean of 4.67 and a standard deviation of 0.54, which is interpreted as "Very High Extent". This indicates that male participants regardless of their age and length of years in service were more challenged in handling students with special needs. The outcome may have been as a result of male teachers' negative attitudes or perceptions regarding the inclusion of special needs students in a regular classroom setting.

Tsakiridou and Polyzopoulou (2014) as reported in Duncara (2019) concurred with this finding, finding that women typically had more favourable sentiments towards the inclusion of children with special needs in a regular classroom setting than did men. This was refuted by the finding of de los Santos (2020), which showed that male instructors had more favorable perceptions of inclusive curriculum design than female teachers and that male teachers also exhibited more favorable settings for the growth of inclusive practices.

Table 3
Significant Difference on the extent of challenges encountered by teachers without SPED Training in terms of AGE

Variables	F – crit	p-value	Interpretation
AGE	1.44	0.245	NOT SIGNIFICANT

Significance at 0.05 level

The Table showed the significant difference on the extent of challenges encountered by teachers without SPED Training in terms of age. The result indicates that there is no significant difference on the challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training in terms of age as denoted by the computed p – value of 0.245. This implies that whatever age group the participants belong to, it would not significantly affect the extent of challenges they had experienced. This also implies that age does not affect the extent of challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training.

Forlin et al. (2009) cited in Yang and Yu (2021) concurred with this finding and suggested that teachers' ages may not significantly influence their attitudes toward inclusive education. The study by Burge et al.; (2008) cited in Mngo (2018) found that younger teachers had a more positive attitude toward including students with disabilities in the general education classroom refuted this notion.

Table 4
Significant Difference on the extent of challenges encountered by teachers without SPED Trainings in terms of LENGTH OF YEARS IN SERVICE

Variables	F – crit	p-value	Interpretation
LENGTH OF SERVICE	0.98	0.387	NOT SIGNIFICANT

Significance at 0.05 level

The Table showed the significant difference on the extent of challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training in terms of length of years in service. The result revealed that the p- value of the variable length of years in service was 0.0387, found to be not significant. Thus, it indicates that there is no significant difference on the extent of challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training in terms of length of years in service. This implies that the participants' length of years in service does not significantly affect the extent of challenges they experienced.

This was agreed by Graham et al. (2020) who stated that more years of expertise do not automatically translate into greater quality practice. New instructors are capable of providing superior instruction on par with more seasoned educators.

However, the study done by Duncara (2019) refuted this notion; teaching experience is another element mentioned in various studies as influencing teachers' attitudes. Younger teachers and those with fewer years of



experience have been found to be more supportive of integration/inclusion than those with more experience, according to Eavramidis and Brahmnorwich (2014) as cited in Duncara (2019).

Table 5
Significant Difference on the extent of challenges encountered by teachers without SPED Trainings in terms of SEX

Variables	t – crit	p-value	Interpretation
SEX	2.701	0.013	SIGNIFICANT

Significance at 0.05 level

Table 5 showed the significant difference on the extent of challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training in terms of sex. The result showed a t- crit of 2.701 and p- value of 0.013, which was interpreted as "Significant". This indicates that there is a significant difference on the extent of challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training in terms of sex. This implies that participants' sex significantly affects the extent of challenges they encountered. It was found that male participants were more challenged than female participants in dealing with students with special needs. This was maybe because male teachers have less tolerance and sympathy to students with special needs. The study of Ellins and Porter (2015) cited in Duncara (2019) had recorded that male teachers have less tolerance for implementing inclusions and lower level of sympathy compared to female teachers.

These findings contribute to the body of research showing that instructors' views toward inclusion are significantly influenced by their gender and that male teachers are perceived as being more hostile than their female counterparts (Al Hawami, 2018). In contrast to that, gender was not substantially correlated with teachers' views toward inclusion, according to a study by Avramidis et al. (2000) as cited in Mngo (2018).

Conclusions:

This study investigated the extent of challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training. The study's findings will serve as the foundation for crafting appropriate training in Special Education to address the challenges encountered by teachers. Based on the results and analyzed data, the following conclusions were derived:

It was determined that teachers without SPED training aged 36 – 40 were more challenged in handling students with special needs than other age groups. This was the case regardless of participants' sexual orientation and length of years in service. It's possible that the results that were shown were because this age group lacks the attitude and the skills to handle students with special needs. According to studies, younger and more experienced teachers expressed more favorable attitudes toward including students with disabilities in general education classes.

In terms of length of years in service, it was found that teachers without SPED training who were in their 4 – 10 years in service were more challenged than those who were 0-3 years and over 10 years in service. This may be an indication that teachers who were on their 4-10 years in service find it hard to handle and address students' needs. This group may lack support, professional training and exhibit an unlikely attitude to improve the quality of teaching and skills in Special Education. Some studies supported this result, younger teachers and those with less teaching experience have been discovered to be much more supportive of integration and inclusion than those with more experience, and they can perform as well as or better than teachers with more teaching experience.

It was determined that male participants were more challenged than female participants in handling students with special needs. This may be attributed to less tolerance and low level of sympathy of male teachers. Less tolerance and sympathy may result in difficulty attending the needs of students; thus, teachers can't maintain inclusivity in the classroom. Many studies supported this result, wherein they stated that males have less tolerance and sympathy than female teachers. Additionally, it was confirmed that women exhibit higher attitudes toward inclusion and employ more inclusive techniques.

On the significant differences in terms of age and length of years in service, the extent of challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training was found to have no significant difference. This means that age and length of years in service do not affect the extent of challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training. Moreover, whether what age group and how long the teacher was in service, it doesn't affect the extent of challenges experienced. On the other hand, sex was found out to have a significant difference on the extent of challenges encountered by teachers



without SPED training. This further means that sex significantly affects the extent of challenges that respondents experienced.

Recommendations:

On the basis of the study's findings and recommendations, the following suggestions were made.

This study suggests that Department of Education – Sagay City Division may craft and fund training in Special Education that would address teachers' challenges in the implementation of inclusive education. Maybe they may expand the study to include all teachers who work with students with special needs in a regular classroom setting, rather than just the ones identified in this study who encountered difficulties to a significant degree.

This study may serve as a guide to the school administrators of Sagay National High School in defining the focus of in-service training of teachers. They may propose training about inclusive education which gives emphasis to teachers identified by this study to be more challenged in handling students with special needs in a regular classroom setup.

The teachers are also encouraged to involve themselves in training that would enhance their knowledge and skills on how to handle students with special needs. They are highly urged to become part of the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the crafting of the training. Also, teachers may undergo professional development like attending relevant training more often and study courses relevant to special education for the benefit of both the teachers and students.

The findings of this study could be used as a springboard for further investigations related to the challenges encountered by teachers without SPED training. Other variables not included in this study can be explored for further findings.

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