

Within the Classroom Doors: Unveiling the Lived Experiences of General Education Teachers in Handling Learners with Special Educational Needs

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Abstract: General education teachers are professionals equipped to teach learners in general education classrooms. However, due to the insufficient number of qualified special education teachers and the rising number of students with disabilities, these teachers are compelled to handle learners with special needs. This study aimed to explore and understand the lived experiences of general education teachers in handling learners with special educational needs. The researcher employed qualitative research, particularly phenomenological design. Seventeen teachers were purposively chosen and interviewed through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, using a validated interview guide. Thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns of themes in the interview data. The results showed that teachers collectively experienced challenges in instructional skills, negative attitudes toward work, uncooperative parents, behavioral issues, and the responsibilities of teaching learners with special educational needs. An analysis of participants' responses revealed that teachers overcame challenges by self-up-skilling through internet resources, demonstrating adaptability, utilizing support systems, and maintaining strong faith in God. The participants shared insights on the belief that teaching is a noble profession and the need for special education training and seminars for non-special education teachers.

Keywords: Special Education, Phenomenology, Philippines

Abstrak: Guru pendidikan umum adalah profesional yang dilengkapi untuk mengajar siswa di kelas pendidikan umum. Namun, akibat dari jumlah guru pendidikan khusus yang tidak mencukupi dan meningkatnya jumlah siswa dengan disabilitas, para guru ini terpaksa menangani siswa dengan kebutuhan pendidikan khusus. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi dan memahami pengalaman hidup para guru pendidikan umum dalam menangani siswa dengan kebutuhan pendidikan khusus. Peneliti menggunakan pendekatan penelitian kualitatif, khususnya desain fenomenologis. Sebanyak tujuh belas guru dipilih secara purposif dan diwawancarai melalui wawancara mendalam dan diskusi kelompok terfokus, menggunakan panduan wawancara yang telah tervalidasi. Analisis tematik digunakan untuk mengidentifikasi pola-pola tema dalam data wawancara. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa para guru secara kolektif menghadapi tantangan dalam keterampilan pengajaran, sikap negatif terhadap pekerjaan, orang tua yang tidak kooperatif, masalah perilaku, serta tanggung jawab dalam mengajar siswa dengan kebutuhan pendidikan khusus. Analisis terhadap respons peserta mengungkapkan bahwa para guru mengatasi tantangan tersebut dengan meningkatkan keterampilan diri melalui sumber daya internet, menunjukkan kemampuan beradaptasi, memanfaatkan sistem pendukung, dan mempertahankan iman yang kuat kepada Tuhan. Para peserta juga berbagi pandangan mengenai keyakinan bahwa mengajar adalah profesi yang mulia dan perlunya pelatihan pendidikan khusus serta seminar bagi guru non-pendidikan khusus.

Kata kunci: Pendidikan Khusus, Fenomenologi, Filipina

INTRODUCTION

Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENs) are students who require additional instructional support and services tailored to their distinct needs (Campado et al., 2023). This assistance includes competent and equipped special education teachers to educate and guide these learners. Special education teachers are qualified professionals who can aid learners with behavioral, growth-related, and physiological concerns; however, the number of these teachers is insufficient to support the growing population of learners who need special education services (Zippia, 2023). Moreover, not all learning institutions are equipped with special education professionals; thus, some students with special needs are enrolled under the guidance of general education teachers (Byrd & Alexander, 2020). In contrast with special education teachers, general education teachers are professionals who provide tailored instruction to learners at any grade level in mainstream classrooms (Ecoben, 2019). This indicates that general education teachers encounter considerable challenges if they teach students with special needs without adequate training. These hurdles involve a lack of awareness of inclusive instruction, trouble adopting necessary modifications, and issues regulating social and teaching strategies tailored to students with special needs (Karim, 2023).

Globally, there is a vast number of children living with disabilities, predominantly residing in developing nations. Some of these learners were enrolled in a regular institution, which implies that non-sped teachers supervised them. In the United States, numerous teachers served almost millions of learners under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and a substantial number of them lacked complete credentials or other qualifications for working in special education. As a result, they struggle to supervise learners with special educational needs which influences overall dynamics in the classroom and potentially compromises the learning process of all learners with disabilities (Clausen et al., 2022).

The Philippine Department of Education provided details that there is a severe scarcity of special education professionals in primary and secondary institutions in the country. In response to the shortage of special education teachers, the Bureau of Learning Delivery-Student Inclusion Division of the Department of Education conducted a training program to provide general education classroom teachers with special education knowledge and abilities to assist teachers in providing excellent education to learners with disabilities. Specifically, the program aims to enable general education teachers with SPED competencies concerning pedagogies, assessment, classroom accommodations, and instructional planning for students with special needs. Despite the initiatives providing training and empowering general education teachers with special education skills, these teachers still encounter challenges and various instructional issues. This denotes that addressing teachers' issues in inclusive settings is too complicated for just a short lecture and training. Teachers face students with a broad range of learning demands, so it is necessary to provide continuing assistance and development to properly address the needs of learners with special needs (Chiu et al., 2023).

Numerous studies have focused on the lived experiences of special education teachers and highlighted both the difficulties and accomplishments of teaching students with exceptional needs (Balading et al., 2023; Çetin & Çay, 2020; Tuvida, 2023;). However, there are insufficient studies that discuss the lived experiences of general education teachers, specifically in handling learners with special educational needs in public elementary schools. Taking this into account, there is a lack of understanding of the real-life perspectives of general education educators who handle learners with special educational needs specifically in the local setting. Hence, it is imperative to conduct this study to examine and understand the lived experiences of general education teachers handling learners with special needs in public elementary schools and to provide insights to the academe and community.

METHOD

The qualitative research method was utilized in the study to collect rich and detailed information on the teachers’ experiences and perspectives. This method enables the researcher to construct a holistic picture, report detailed informant views, and conduct the study naturally. Particularly, the study employed a phenomenological research design to thoroughly examine teachers' perspectives and the meanings associated with their interactions with students with special needs.

General education teachers from public elementary schools were involved in the study. The participants were chosen intentionally through purposive sampling. Specifically, criterion-based sampling was utilized to identify individuals who contributed information using their knowledge. Ten participants were obtained for in-depth interviews (IDI) and seven participants for focus group discussion (FGD).

The research instrument utilized in this study is an in-depth interview guide which was constructed by the researcher. It consisted of a series of interview questions for the gathering of valuable data for this study, which included guide and probing questions to extract useful varieties of information. The interview questions were undergone a series of consultations and validations from a pool of experts in special education and research studies to ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

The interview responses were transcribed and translated by the researcher. The participants' responses were transcribed verbatim, translating speech to text exactly as it sounds, without deleting the mistakes and pauses. The thematic analysis method was employed to extract themes from the text by analyzing the word and sentence structure. Moreover, data source triangulation was utilized to validate the results of the prime participants of the study by comparing their responses with those of the other set of participants experiencing the same phenomenon.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Lived Experiences of Teachers in Handling Learners with Special Educational Needs

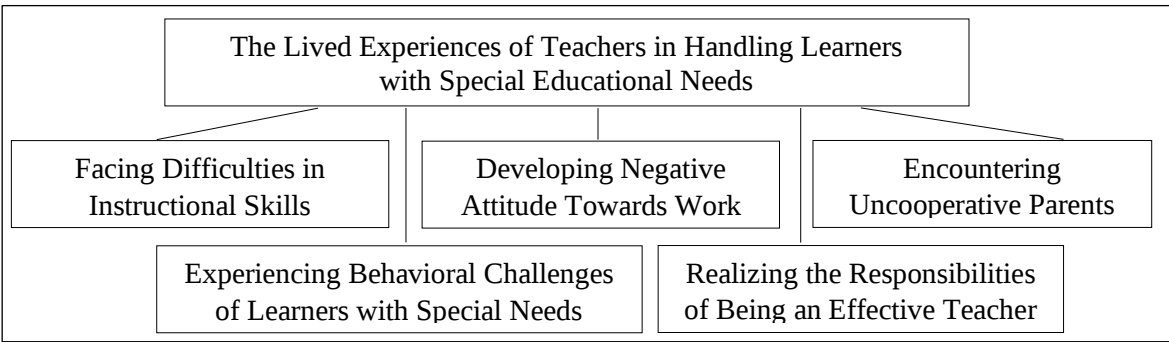


Figure 1. A thematic map displaying the extracted themes on the lived experiences of teachers in handling learners with special educational needs.

Facing Difficulties in Instructional Skills. This theme implies that teachers encounter complexities in providing effective instruction to learners with special educational needs. Teachers experienced this instructional issue because they lacked skills and understanding about various learning disabilities. Their statements were as follows:

“I feel uncertain about how to assist or teach them because I lack experience and training”(Personal Communication IDI #1, 04/11/24).

“I want to learn how to teach learners with special educational needs (LSEs), but my knowledge in this area is limited” (Personal Communication IDI #2, 04/11/24).

“One of my challenges is figuring out how to support them effectively and apply the appropriate teaching methods” (Personal Communication IDI #9, 04/11/24).

“My challenge lies in the instructional aspect, as I’m unsure how to teach these types of learners. I also haven’t received training on supporting students with special needs” (Personal Communication FGD #3, 04/12/24).

The theme corresponds with the findings in the study of Gyasi et al. (2020), that teachers also held limited in-depth knowledge about special education which compelled them to face difficulties in teaching learners with special needs. Teachers' lack of SPED knowledge restrains them from providing quality education for learners with disabilities. If teachers are ill-prepared because they do not possess the essential SPED skills and knowledge, they will encounter instructional difficulties in responding to the diverse demands of LSEs (Olayvar, 2022). Providing effective instruction to learners with special educational needs is exceptionally challenging, especially if teachers lack the skills and understanding to teach learners with various learning preferences and difficulties; thus, it is necessary to consider that all teachers must be trained to develop their competence in handling learners with special needs (Mandabon, 2023).

Developing Negative Attitude Towards Work. This theme conveys that handling LSEs led teachers to establish a pessimistic mindset toward their work. A contributing factor to this negative disposition was the alarming behavior of LSEs. The concerning behaviors of LSEs like sudden outbursts, refusal of teachers' directions, and aggression cause classroom disturbance that evokes teachers to be unmotivated. Their responses are indicated below:

“It’s disheartening, and at times I lose the motivation to teach because handling them can be exhausting” (Personal Communication IDI #3, 04/11/24).

I sometimes lose the motivation to teach. There are days when I hesitate to go to school, fearing that this child might have another tantrum.” (Personal Communication IDI #6, 04/11/24).

“It drains my motivation to teach, making it tempting to leave the profession. I feel constantly stressed because of this, and it affects me both emotionally and physically” (Personal Communication FGD #4, 04/12/24).

“I feel a bit frustrated, as I was assigned these students without having any background or prior experience with them” (Personal Communication FGD #6, 04/12/24).

The findings also resonate with the study of Di Maggio (2020), where general education teachers showed a less favorable attitude toward their work specifically in behavioral and affective aspects. It was also determined that the teachers’ poor self-efficacy drove them to have a negative attitude toward working with LSEs. If a teacher has low self-efficacy in handling LSEs, teachers will have a negative view or attitude regarding their work (Love et al., 2019). Furthermore, the prevailing reason teachers develop negative attitudes about their work is the concerning behavior of some LSEs. It was highlighted in the study of Amstad and Müller (2020) that the violent behavior of LSEs is the most stressful behavior that teachers are apprehensive about. This behavior includes hitting, biting, kicking, or talking about suicide. These behavioral

issues brought about a negative learning environment that pressures teachers and intensifies their stress and fatigue (Alhwaiti, 2022).

Encountering Uncooperative Parents. This is one of the emerging themes identified based on the analysis of participants' responses. One reason that makes their work in handling LSENs more complex is encountering uncooperative parents. General education teachers felt distressed when they encountered parents who did not disclose and were in denial about the real condition of their children, and who were unwilling to discuss or talk. The following are their responses:

"Another challenge I face is that some parents are in denial, making it difficult for me to communicate that their child needs support" (Personal Communication IDI #4, 04/11/24).

"...some parents seem to simply ignore these kinds of challenges, remaining in denial and unable to accept that their children have these needs" (Personal Communication IDI #6, 04/11/24).

"A major challenge for me is the lack of support from parents. I've tried reaching out to them, but they don't seem interested in engaging or offering help. It appears they are still in denial about their child's condition" (Personal Communication FGD #5, 04/12/24).

"When there's a PTA meeting, not all parents attend, which becomes a missed opportunity for me to discuss their children's behavior with them" (Personal Communication FGD #6, 04/12/24).

In the study of Balgos and Villarente (2022), teachers were mindful of the lack of parents' cooperation in the education of their children with special needs. They perceived that some parents were uncooperative because of their work responsibilities. These were low-income parents who had to work harder to meet the needs of their families. They opted to dedicate their time to earning money for their daily needs rather than attending meetings. Another determinant of parent unsupportiveness is their reluctance to accept their children's condition. Denial is a prevalent emotion that some parents experience when their children are identified with special needs. Denial involves refusing to recognize that their child has a disability. They refuse to accept this situation because of the fear that their child will confront adversities in life or face rejection from others (Mann & Gilmore, 2021).

Experiencing Behavioral Challenges of Learners with Special Needs. Learners with special needs may display disturbing behavior relative to their condition that needs appropriate intervention. LSEN's behavior differs from one to another; thus, making it more difficult for teachers to handle them and leading to classroom management difficulties. Outlined below are their responses:

"...when I reprimanded him, he punched me in the back, and I couldn't defend myself—it hurt. Then, others started yelling at me because they didn't understand why they were being reprimanded" (Personal Communication IDI #3, 04/11/24).

"...when you're teaching and they're running around, not listening, it truly tests your patience. I've tried various strategies to help them settle down, but nothing seems to work" (Personal Communication IDI #5, 04/11/24).

“I experienced trauma while handling a student with autism who tended to hurt classmates” (Personal Communication IDI #8, 04/11/24)

“If one of my pupils throws a tantrum, he suddenly starts shouting and causing a scene, sometimes even picking fights or disrupting his classmates” (Personal Communication FGD #2, 04/12/24).

As reported in the study of Amstad and Müller (2020), learners with special needs frequently manifest a high incidence of disruptive behavior. The study also revealed that the antisocial behavior of LSENs is the most stressful behavior experienced by teachers. Matching findings from the research of Rafailis and Marikit (2024) found that the main obstacle for general education teachers in handling LSENs is their behavioral problems displayed within the classroom. Teachers found it challenging due to the lack of familiarity with learners with special needs.

Realizing the Responsibilities of Being an Effective Teacher. The participants also conveyed their issues regarding the responsibilities of being teachers of learners with special educational needs. To be an effective teacher in handling LSENs, they discerned that it is a must to provide learning opportunities to these learners, utilizing innovative strategies for classroom learning, and establish a better teacher-learner engagement through proper communication and intervention. They viewed it as a waste of time if learners were not being helped in their learning process. Their statements were as follows:

“I really can't give them enough time to learn. I also have limited teaching hours, so I can't give them my time” (Personal Communication IDI #2, 04/11/24).

“I feel ineffective as a teacher because it seems like they're not learning anything. The books aren't being utilized, and they're not writing anything down” (Personal Communication IDI #3, 04/11/24).

“I continue to struggle because I'm not a SPED teacher or a professional trained to address their needs effectively. The appropriate professionals should truly be the ones to support them” (Personal Communication IDI #6, 04/11/24).

“I'll experiment with various strategies to help them learn more effectively and keep pace with their classmates” (Personal Communication FGD #2, 04/12/24).

The result is parallel to the study of Ecoben (2019) that public school teachers in the Department of Education were cognizant of their responsibilities in handling learners with special needs. It was determined that one obligation that teachers should provide is appropriate teaching strategies tailored to the needs of LSENs. The investigation of Arcuino et al. (2022) also indicated that teachers were concerned about their responsibility in the holistic development of LSENs. This implies that teachers should guide LSENs in areas beyond academics and teach skills that will help them overcome life struggles.

Coping Mechanisms of Teachers in Handling Learners with Special Educational Needs

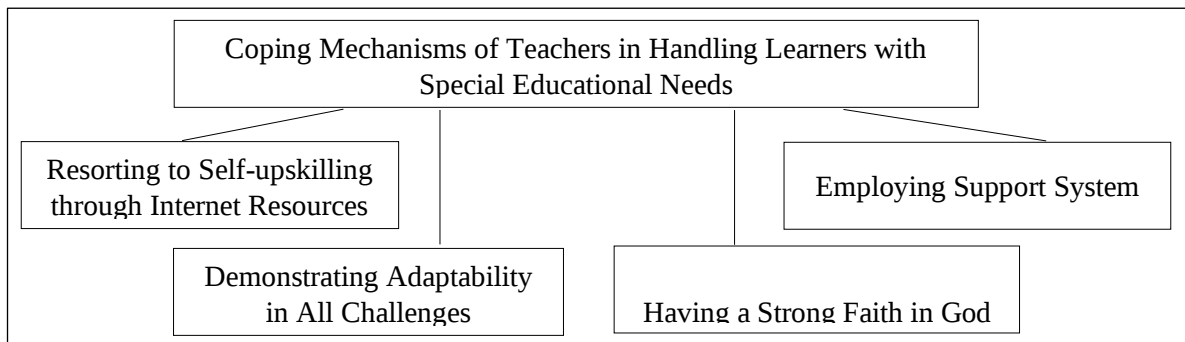


Figure 2. A thematic map depicting the extracted themes regarding how general education teachers overcome the challenges in handling learners with special educational needs.

Resorting to Self-upskilling through Internet Resources. To bridge their shortcomings in handling LSENs, these teachers viewed videos from YouTube on how to deal with LSENs, did research from Google for more information about special education (SPED), and visited other sources on the internet for possible ways helpful for LSENs. These strategies were applied by some of the participants, as they stated:

“I ask for help from Google. After using Google, I then go to YouTube. Many videos on YouTube are very helpful in managing these types of learners” (Personal Communication IDI #1, 04/11/24).

“I’m also researching and watching videos on YouTube to learn how to handle them effectively” (Personal Communication FGD #6, 04/12/24).

“I’m searching on Google for ways to teach them. It’s very helpful to look up information or watch videos on YouTube, as you can learn effective strategies for handling learners with special needs” (Personal Communication FGD #7, 04/12/24).

The theme concurs with the research findings of Omoso and Villarente (2024) where general education teachers utilize digital platforms to find information that can assist them in handling LSENs. These teachers navigate the internet as a reinforcement to help them acquire SPED knowledge efficiently. The internet has also influenced the role of teachers in their teaching and favored them in accessing content and materials that could support them with the challenges in their work. Moreover, the study by Balgos and Villarente (2022) revealed that videos on the Internet were beneficial in overcoming challenges in teaching learners with special needs, and watching online videos positively influences teachers’ profound learning and motivation.

Demonstrating Adaptability in All Challenges. This theme exemplifies the adaptability of the teachers in responding to the issues they encountered in handling LSENs. They display adaptability by making some adjustments to how topics are taught, finding ways to extend help to learners with special needs, being flexible in dealing with learners, modifying teaching strategies, and taking an enlightening new approach to handling learners with special needs. The theme was extracted from the responses as stated:

“We need to apply different strategies and learn how to handle them properly” (Personal Communication IDI #2, 04/11/24).

“I’m still experimenting and discovering what strategies are applicable and what aren’t. You can’t expect a particular approach to be effective right away; patience is essential. It’s important to experiment to determine what works best for them” (Personal Communication IDI #5, 04/11/24).

“I need to find ways to identify what is effective and what isn’t in addressing my challenges with them, particularly regarding their behavior. I shouldn’t focus solely on regular students, as other types of learners also require attention” (Personal Communication IDI #10, 04/11/24).

“There should be adjustments, such as allowing them more time to complete tasks and making those tasks shorter” (Personal Communication FGD #3, 04/12/24).

The study by Quizana (2023) revealed that one strategy teachers employed to handle challenges in handling LSENs was implementing differentiated instruction. Through utilizing varied teaching methods, LSENs were consistently occupied and were motivated to participate. It was contended by Auscavitch (2022), that differentiated instruction is about personalizing lessons to accommodate each student’s distinct needs. The instruction is adjusted based on the learners’ preferences, struggles, and strengths but maintains the same learning objective as others. Through these methods, teachers can mitigate problematic behaviors particularly posed by LSENs during class discussions.

Employing Support System. This theme reveals that the participants were leveraging a support system to help them cope with the issues they faced in handling LSENs. The participants were collaborating with their colleagues, seeking advice from SPED teachers, and providing updates on the learners’ development for improvement, recommendations, or counseling. The following were their statements:

“I frequently ask my colleagues for advice on what’s best, and we also have master teachers (MTs) who can guide me on what to do” (Personal Communication IDI #2, 04/11/24).

“I’m not embarrassed to ask for help. I seek guidance from those who are more experienced, as they have a wealth of knowledge compared to me” (Personal Communication IDI #3, 04/11/24).

“My strategy is to communicate with their parents. I provide updates on their child’s academic progress and also report on their behavior” (Personal Communication FGD #4, 04/12/24).

“I communicate with the parents regularly through messages, providing updates on what their child is doing in the classroom” (Personal Communication FGD #6, 04/12/24).

Establishing a support system was one of the strategies employed by the participants in the study of Auscavitch (2022). The study indicated that general education teachers had specific consultation schedules with special education teachers. It was also reported that teachers could gain further insights into their learner’s educational history because of their strong relationship with special education teachers. Similarly, Omoso and Villarente (2024) revealed that receiving or non-SPED teachers relied on their co-teachers. Their co-teachers provided them with emotional and professional support to overcome their issues with SPED skills and resources and in managing

LSENs. General education teachers must collaborate with other professionals especially SPED teachers to acquire the necessary special education proficiencies and to effectively support learners with special needs (Pinter et al., 2021).

Having a Strong Faith in God. This theme brings to light the spiritual aspect of some participants. To soothe their worries about the challenges they experience, they uphold the belief that all challenges are a gateway to heaven, believe that challenges are part of God’s plan, and always pray to God for strength. The participants manifested a strong connection with God, as they stated:

“Lord, gave me these challenges because they need help” (Personal Communication IDI #7, 04/11/24).

“...these challenges are our gateway to heaven. It’s a plan of God.” (Personal Communication #9, 04/11/24).

“Pray always. Always ask for guidance” (Personal Communication FGD #3, 04/12/24).

“Let’s pray to be given strength and good health so we can continue to help students in need” (Personal Communication FGD #7, 04/12/24).

The theme is identical to the analysis of Macmbinji and Pwani (2018), where certain teachers employed an emotion-focused strategy, particularly spiritual healing to mitigate their difficulties in teaching children with disabilities. This is further corroborated by the research of Alegarbes (2022), by which teachers joined religious organizations and sought religious support to manage the stress of handling students with disabilities. Faith has a vital role in making teachers resilient amidst difficulties. It is also an effective tool for resolving conflicts and promotes self-control during adverse situations in school (Phillips, 2021). Moreover, Ozcan et al. (2021) elucidated that sound mental health can be strengthened through faith-based mechanisms. It can likewise aid people in cultivating inner peace and stability during challenging circumstances.

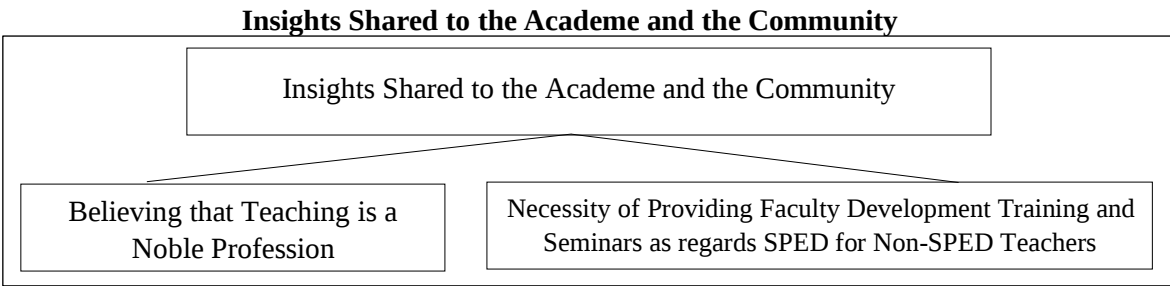


Figure 3. A thematic map showing the extracted themes on the insights shared with the academe and the community.

Believing that Teaching is a Noble Profession. This theme denotes the participants’ insights on the significance of their profession, especially in handling LSENs. It encompasses concepts such as extending guidance to learners with special needs regarding discipline, exerting more effort in teaching LSENs, nurturing their potential together with the regular learners, and giving extra time to communicate with LSENs and their parents. Their responses are indicated below:

“We should be understanding and empathetic toward them, recognizing that they need support. As teachers, we should use all our resources and abilities to help them as much as possible” (Personal Communication IDI #2, 04/11/24).

“Since we’re in the field of teaching, we should extend our patience even further. Let’s take the time to explore their backgrounds and understand their needs so we can determine the best approach for each of them” (Personal Communication IDI #3, 04/11/24).

“We must put in a great deal of effort to support their learning. We should also continue improving ourselves to effectively meet the needs of these learners” (Personal Communication IDI #5, 04/11/24).

“We need to love and support all our children equally. Every child deserves fair treatment, whether they have special needs or not” (Personal Communication FGD #2, 04/12/24).

“We should collaborate with parents and other teachers, especially SPED teachers, as they can help us address our challenges” (Personal Communication FGD #4, 04/12/24).

Special education teachers are trained and skilled professionals in handling learners with various disabilities; yet they still experience difficulties in teaching and managing LSENs (Karabiyik & Avcioglu, 2021). This suggests that the challenge is even greater for non-SPED teachers. General education teachers are non-SPED teachers who fill the gap left by the limited number of SPED teachers. Despite the lack of proper training and SPED skills, general education teachers still put forth their utmost effort to provide quality education to their learners with special needs (Omoso & Villarente, 2022).

Nobility as explained is a word used to define people who have a high value in the community and humanity, and these individuals contribute significantly to society. For the community to progress and gain knowledge, someone should embody professional attributes and teach noble things, and these responsibilities can only be provided by the teachers (Parsons, 2022). Moreover, the community must acknowledge teaching as a noble profession because teachers are producers of other professionals. Without teachers, it would be a significant challenge for each community member to achieve their dreams (Ntshangase, 2021).

The Necessity of Providing Faculty Development Training and Seminars Regarding SPED for Non-SPED Teachers. This theme points to the idea that general education teachers or non-SPED teachers must be provided with opportunities to undergo professional development in special education. Their feedback is presented below:

“We haven’t received any training. It feels like we’re given students with special needs and expected to figure out how to support them on our own” (Personal Communication IDI #2, 04/11/24).

“I need specific knowledge to effectively support them. It’s not something I can simply figure out; it requires expertise. Teachers working with these learners should have proper training, which I’m looking forward to receiving” (Personal Communication IDI #4, 04/11/24).

“I believe almost none of us received this kind of training, which is why I struggled with teaching. Additionally, there isn’t much support from the administration” (Personal Communication FGD #3, 04/12/24).

The same point was highlighted in the study of Auscavitch (2022), which states that school leaders and administrators should provide support and continuous professional training to mainstream classroom teachers or non-sped teachers to strengthen their capabilities in handling learners with disabilities. Most general education teachers were trained to provide adaptive teaching methods in a general education classroom; this suggests that their theoretical knowledge and skills in special education were limited. Hence, the government and academic institutions must provide opportunities to enable these teachers to efficiently bridge their knowledge gaps and digest special education competencies (Babar, 2021).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

As indicated by the findings of this research, it can be implied that teachers with insufficient knowledge, skills, and experience in handling learners with special educational needs could encounter various challenges. These challenges encompass multiple aspects of their profession that affect their emotional stability, spiritual state, and physical condition. The findings further indicate that the struggles they experience also weaken their enthusiasm to provide effective education and hinder their ability to deliver the best work in their profession. Moreover, the unfavorable circumstances that teachers experience drive them to adopt or develop numerous coping strategies that could support them in navigating the challenges they encounter in handling LSENs. Skill-building sessions and professional development should not be limited to special education teachers. Schools Division should also equip general education teachers with the necessary SPED skills and knowledge as these teachers address the gap left by the shortage of SPED teachers. Most significantly, the Department of Education should strengthen its frameworks to safeguard teachers from LSENs with alarming behavior and offer additional support that empowers teachers' commitment to quality education, especially in the field of special education.

This study has certain defined objectives that limit its scope and findings; thus, future researchers may utilize other methods or explore further issues concerning special education, specifically teachers handling learners with special educational needs. Future researchers may utilize mixed-method research to provide a complete understanding of the issues and holistic findings that are more beneficial for policymakers or administrators. Further, it is strongly recommended that future research should delve into teachers at different education levels. They may examine teachers in elementary, high school, and senior high school settings to compare and understand the influence of grade levels on their approach to handling LSENs. Furthermore, prospective studies may examine the experience of teachers in handling learners with a specific disability type. This may include learning and physical disabilities, ADHD, autism spectrum disorder, and other disabilities to extract insights into how learners with specific disability influence teachers' perspectives and responses.

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