

Article

Teacher Readiness and Challenges in Inclusive Classrooms

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Abstract: This study explored the challenges and preparedness levels of public and private school teachers in implementing inclusive education for students with special needs. Utilizing a descriptive-correlational design, the study examined the relationship between the challenges teachers face and their preparedness across four key areas: self-efficacy, self-help, social, and academic skills. Data was gathered through researcher-constructed survey questionnaires, with results analyzed statistically. Findings revealed that teachers face significant challenges in addressing the diverse needs of special education students, particularly in accessing resources, creating individualized learning plans, and managing behavioral issues. Teachers were rated as "prepared" at a basic level in addressing self-help, social, and academic skills, but "somewhat prepared" in fostering self-efficacy. Notably, there was no significant correlation between challenges and preparedness, indicating a disconnect between training and the practical realities of inclusive classrooms. The study underscores the need for targeted professional development, enhanced resource allocation, and stronger parental and institutional support to bridge this gap. These findings aim to guide the development of intervention programs to better equip teachers for inclusive education.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Teacher Preparedness, Challenges in Inclusive Classrooms, Self-Efficacy, Self-Help Skills, Social Skills, Academic Skills,

Introduction

Inclusive classrooms are critical for promoting equity and diversity in education, ensuring that all students, regardless of abilities or backgrounds, have access to quality learning environments. Research emphasizes that inclusive education fosters social justice by breaking down barriers to learning and

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participation, which contributes to a more cohesive society (Ranbir & Ph.D., 2024). It supports students in developing interpersonal skills and empathy by interacting with peers from diverse backgrounds (Estrada Alarcón & Bravo Pineda, 2024). The universal approach of inclusive classrooms also aligns with global commitments like the UN Sustainable Development Goals, focusing on quality education for all (Jardinez & Natividad, 2024). Importantly, inclusive classrooms contribute to positive academic and social outcomes, benefiting students with and without disabilities (Sudarso et al., 2024). Moreover, they address systemic disparities by offering flexible and student-centered teaching strategies, such as Universal Design for Learning and differentiated instruction (Tampubolon et al., 2023). Research underscores that inclusive education nurtures a sense of belonging and acceptance, promoting positive attitudes among students and educators (Yadav, 2021). Policymakers and educational stakeholders increasingly view inclusive classrooms as pivotal to preparing students for a multicultural and interconnected world (Masalesa, 2022). Importantly, the benefits of inclusion extend beyond individual classrooms, as it creates ripple effects for societal inclusivity and understanding (Hoque & Nasrin, 2023). Finally, inclusive education contributes to nurturing well-rounded individuals equipped with critical social and academic skills, aligning with contemporary educational values (Poly & Harishma, 2023).

Teacher readiness is paramount for the success of inclusive classrooms, as educators are the primary agents in adapting practices to meet diverse student needs. Studies highlight that teacher self-efficacy is closely linked to their ability to implement inclusive strategies effectively (Vantieghem et al., 2023). Professional development programs that enhance teachers' knowledge of differentiated instruction, cultural responsiveness, and assistive technologies significantly improve readiness (Palei, 2024). Additionally, inclusive education requires teachers to hold positive attitudes towards student diversity and a belief in their responsibility to address it (Santarosa et al., 2021). Researchers have identified collaboration among educators, parents, and support staff as crucial for readiness (Monteiro & Ikegami, 2023). However, a significant gap persists in providing adequate teacher preparation, particularly in low-resource settings (Erni & Dewi, 2024). Teachers' readiness also depends on their ability to manage classroom diversity through specific skills like collaboration, problem-solving, and fostering student engagement (Jardinez & Natividad, 2024). Finally, targeted support from administrators and policymakers plays an essential role in equipping teachers to meet the challenges of inclusivity (Poly & Harishma, 2023).

The effectiveness of inclusive education hinges on teacher readiness and the challenges they encounter in fostering inclusivity. Research reveals that teacher self-efficacy plays a pivotal role in addressing the diverse needs of students in inclusive classrooms (Vantieghem et al., 2023). Specific areas such as self-help skills, social skills, and academic skills require teachers to possess advanced pedagogical strategies and adaptability (Palei, 2024). Teachers often

report challenges in equipping students with self-help skills due to inadequate training in handling diverse abilities (Estrada Alarcón & Bravo Pineda, 2024).

Social skill development in inclusive classrooms also requires significant effort, particularly in promoting peer acceptance and minimizing bullying, a responsibility that many teachers feel underprepared to handle (Tampubolon et al., 2023). Similarly, ensuring academic skill development demands differentiated instruction and individualized learning plans, which many educators struggle to design and implement effectively (Erni & Dewi, 2024). Teachers also face logistical barriers such as insufficient resources, large class sizes, and inadequate support from administrators (Jardinez & Natividad, 2024). Collaborative teaching models and ongoing professional development have been proposed as solutions to address these challenges, but their adoption remains inconsistent (Monteiro & Ikegami, 2023). Without adequate training in areas such as fostering self-efficacy, addressing self-help challenges, and developing social and academic skills, teachers often feel unprepared for the demands of inclusive classrooms (Poly & Harishma, 2023).

Researchers have explored various dimensions of teacher readiness and challenges in inclusive classrooms through diverse methodologies. Mixed-methods studies have been widely utilized to combine quantitative assessments of teacher self-efficacy with qualitative analyses of lived experiences (Vantieghem et al., 2023). For instance, case studies focusing on specific regions or school systems have provided valuable insights into cultural and systemic factors affecting inclusion (Erni & Dewi, 2024). Longitudinal studies have examined the progression of teacher preparedness over time, linking professional development interventions to improved outcomes in inclusivity (Palei, 2024). Experimental designs have tested the effectiveness of specific strategies, such as Universal Design for Learning and differentiated instruction, in enhancing teacher competency (Estrada Alarcón & Bravo Pineda, 2024). Surveys have also been instrumental in capturing educators' perceptions of their own readiness and the systemic barriers they face (Monteiro & Ikegami, 2023). Collaborative approaches that include interviews with teachers, administrators, and policymakers have shed light on the broader ecosystem of inclusive education (Hoque & Nasrin, 2023).

Despite the growing body of research on inclusive education, significant gaps remain in understanding the specific challenges faced by Filipino teachers in implementing inclusive practices, particularly within the local contexts of Cebu City. Furthermore, while self-efficacy, self-help skills, social skills, and academic skills are widely recognized as critical components of inclusive education, little research explores how Filipino teachers address these dimensions in their day-to-day teaching. The intersection of these challenges with regional constraints, such as access to training and support infrastructure, has not been sufficiently studied. Additionally, previous research rarely delves into the practical implementation of findings through action-based solutions, such as training-workshop programs tailored to local needs. This study aims to fill these gaps by providing actionable

insights into the specific needs and challenges of teachers, forming the basis for an evidence-driven intervention program. Moreover, this research has significant potential benefits for educators, students, and policymakers. For teachers, it provides actionable insights into improving their preparedness and efficacy in inclusive classrooms. Students benefit through enhanced learning experiences and improved social inclusion when teachers are better equipped to address diverse needs. Policymakers can leverage findings to design more effective professional development programs and allocate resources where they are needed most.

Methodology

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design to determine the correlation between the demographic profiles of public-school teachers and their levels of challenges and preparedness in implementing inclusive education. The survey questionnaire served as the primary tool for data collection, designed to measure both the challenges faced and the preparedness levels of teachers in public schools across Cebu City, Talisay City, and the municipality of Cordova. This quantitative approach allowed for the collection of measurable data, which were analyzed using statistical procedures, as suggested by Creswell (2008). The study adopted the Input-Process-Output (IPO) model to systematically address its objectives. Convenience sampling was employed to select respondents, considering the accessibility of participants, time constraints, and the willingness of teachers to participate in the study. This non-random sampling approach, as described by Etikan et al. (2016), facilitated the efficient gathering of data from teachers who were directly involved in the study's focus areas. The study utilized a researcher-constructed survey questionnaire divided into two primary tools: one measuring the degree of challenges faced by teachers in handling inclusive education and the other assessing their preparedness levels for its implementation. These tools aimed to capture insights into the unique experiences of teachers, serving as a basis for analyzing the relationships between their demographic variables and their perceived challenges and preparedness in inclusive education. The gathered data were then statistically analyzed to provide evidence-based findings for the development of an intervention training-workshop program tailored to the needs of the target population.

Results and Discussion

The data reveals that teachers face several challenges in addressing the self-efficacy of students with special needs in inclusive classrooms, as indicated by an overall aggregate weighted mean of 3.0, interpreted as "challenged". Specific areas of difficulty include insufficient resources for supporting students' self-efficacy (WM = 3.2) and limited collaboration with special education professionals or co-teaching practices (WM = 2.9). Teachers also reported challenges in creating

individualized learning plans tailored to students' needs (WM = 3.3, highly challenged and fostering classroom environments conducive to building self-efficacy (WM = 2.9).

Table 1. Challenges Faced in Addressing SPED Students' Self-Efficacy

No	Indicators	WM	VD
1	I feel unsupported in addressing the self-efficacy of students with special needs in inclusive classrooms	3.0	CH
2	Resources provided to teachers for supporting students with special needs in building self-efficacy are often insufficient.	3.2	CH
3	My classroom environment is not always conducive to fostering the self-efficacy of students with special needs.	2.9	CH
4	I face challenges in creating and implementing individualized learning plans tailored to the specific needs of students with disabilities to enhance their self-efficacy.	3.3	HC
5	My collaboration with special education professionals or engagement in co-teaching practices to support the self-efficacy of students with special needs is limited.	2.9	CH
6	I encounter difficulties in promoting active engagement and participation of students with special needs in classroom activities that contribute to building self-efficacy.	3.0	CH
7	I struggle with addressing behavioral challenges among students with special needs that may impact their self-efficacy and participation in class.	3.0	CH
8	I struggle to effectively assess the progress and self-efficacy of students with special needs and provide constructive feedback that encourages self-belief and improvement.	3.0	CH
9	I experience that parental involvement in supporting the efforts of teachers to enhance the self-efficacy of students with special needs within the classroom is often lacking.	3.0	CH
10	I observe that measures to provide emotional and social support to students with special needs, impacting their self-efficacy in the classroom, are not consistently implemented.	3.1	CH
Aggregate Weighted Mean		3.0	CH

Additional difficulties include promoting active participation of students in activities that build self-belief, managing behavioral issues, and assessing progress while providing constructive feedback, all with a weighted mean of 3.0. Furthermore, lack of parental involvement (WM = 3.0) and inconsistent implementation of emotional and social support measures (WM = 3.1) were also noted as challenges. These findings highlight a pressing need for improved resources, support systems, and training to address these issues effectively.

Table 2 shows that teachers face notable challenges in helping students with special needs develop self-help skills in inclusive classrooms, with an overall aggregate weighted mean of 3.0, interpreted as "challenged". Teachers reported significant difficulties in accessing resources and tools necessary for teaching self-help skills, reflected by the highest weighted mean of 3.3, categorized as "highly challenged".

Table 2. Challenges in addressing SPED students' self-help skills

No	Indicators	WM	VD
1	I encounter difficulties in adapting instructional methods to effectively teach self-help skills to students with special needs in inclusive classrooms.	3.2	CH
2	I encounter challenges due to limited access to resources and tools necessary to teach and reinforce self-help skills among students with special needs.	3.3	HC
3	Integrating self-help skill development into the curriculum for students with special needs presents challenges.	2.5	CH
4	Creating and implementing individualized plans to develop self-help skills tailored to the diverse needs of students with disabilities poses challenges.	3.1	CH
5	Collaborative efforts between me and support staff to reinforce and teach self-help skills to students with special needs are hindered by challenges in coordination and cooperation.	2.9	CH
6	I struggle with managing behavioral issues that may impede the acquisition and reinforcement of self-help skills among students with special needs.	3.1	CH
7	Effectively assessing the progress and development of self-help skills in students with special needs presents challenges on me.	3.0	CH
8	Limited parental engagement and support hinder the reinforcement and practice of self-help skills taught in the classroom for students with special needs.	3.1	CH
9	Challenges in creating an inclusive environment within the classroom pose difficulties in teaching and encouraging self-help skills among students with special needs.	3.1	CH
10	Addressing emotional and social factors that affect the development of self-help skills in students with special needs presents challenges on me within inclusive settings.	3.0	CH
Aggregate Weighted Mean		3.0	CH

Other key challenges include adapting instructional methods (WM = 3.2), creating individualized plans (WM = 3.1), and addressing behavioral issues that impede skill development (WM = 3.1). Limited parental engagement and collaboration with support staff also present difficulties, with weighted means of 3.1 and 2.9, respectively. Teachers find it challenging to integrate self-help skill development into the curriculum (WM = 2.5) and to create inclusive environments that encourage these skills (WM = 3.1). Additionally, assessing the progress of students in developing self-help skills and addressing emotional and social factors affecting their growth both scored a weighted mean of 3.0. These findings highlight the need for more resources, parental involvement, and structured support systems to better equip teachers in fostering self-help skills in inclusive settings.

Table 3 reveals that teachers face several challenges in addressing the social skills of students with special needs in inclusive classrooms, with an overall aggregate weighted mean of 3.0, categorized as "challenged". Key challenges include facilitating social interactions and fostering peer relationships (WM = 3.1) and teaching social cues, non-verbal communication, and social norms (WM = 3.1). Teachers also struggle to create and implement individualized plans tailored to

developing students' social skills (WM = 3.1) and to establish an inclusive environment that supports these skills (WM = 3.1).

Table 3. Challenges in Addressing SPED students' social skills

No	Indicators	WM	VD
1	I encounter challenges in facilitating social interactions and fostering peer relationships among students with special needs in inclusive classrooms.	3.1	CH
2	Integrating social skill development into the curriculum for students with special needs presents challenges on me in mainstream classrooms.	3.0	CH
3	Teaching social cues, non-verbal communication, and social norms to students with special needs poses challenges on me within inclusive settings.	3.1	CH
4	Creating and implementing individualized plans to develop social skills tailored to the diverse needs of students with disabilities presents challenges on me	3.1	CH
5	Establishing a supportive and inclusive environment that encourages the development of social skills among students with special needs presents challenges on me.	3.1	CH
6	Managing behavioral issues that may hinder the acquisition and practice of social skills among students with special needs presents challenges on me in inclusive classrooms.	3.1	CH
7	Effectively assessing and monitoring the progress and development of social skills in students with special needs presents challenges on me.	2.9	CH
8	Limited parental involvement and support in reinforcing social skills learned in the classroom hinder the development of these skills among students with special needs.	3.0	CH
9	Challenges in promoting positive peer interactions and inclusive social activities within the classroom environment hinder social skill development for students with special needs.	3.0	CH
10	Addressing emotional and social factors that impact the development of social skills in students with special needs poses challenges for teachers within inclusive settings.	3.0	CH
Aggregate Weighted Mean		3.0	CH

Managing behavioral issues that hinder social skill development also presents significant difficulties (WM = 3.1). Additionally, teachers find it challenging to integrate social skill development into the curriculum (WM = 3.0) and promote positive peer interactions and inclusive activities (WM = 3.0). Limited parental involvement in reinforcing these skills further compounds the issue (WM = 3.0). Lastly, assessing and monitoring students' progress in developing social skills (WM = 2.9) and addressing emotional and social factors impacting these skills (WM = 3.0) are areas where teachers feel challenged. These findings emphasize the need for better resources, targeted training, and collaborative support systems to help teachers effectively foster social skills in students with special needs.

Table 4 highlights that teachers encounter several challenges in addressing the academic skills of students with special needs in inclusive classrooms, with an overall aggregate weighted mean of 3.1, categorized as "challenged". A significant challenge identified is the limited access to specialized resources and tools, which received the highest weighted mean of 3.3, indicating a "highly challenged" rating.

Teachers also struggle with adapting the curriculum and teaching methods to meet diverse academic needs (WM = 3.1) and implementing individualized learning plans tailored to each student (WM = 3.1).

Table 4. Challenges faced in addressing SPED students' academic skills

No	Indicators	WM	VD
1	I encounter difficulties in adapting curriculum and teaching methods to effectively address the diverse academic needs of students with special needs in inclusive classrooms.	3.1	CH
2	Limited access to specialized resources and tools hampers my ability to cater to the individual academic needs of students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms.	3.3	HC
3	Implementing individualized learning plans tailored to the academic needs of students with special needs presents challenges on me within inclusive settings.	3.1	CH
4	Collaborative efforts and support among teachers, aides, and specialists to address the academic needs of students with special needs face challenges in coordination and implementation.	3.0	CH
5	Managing behavioral issues that impact learning and focus among students with special needs hinders their academic skill development in an inclusive classroom.	3.0	CH
6	Effectively assessing and monitoring the academic progress and achievements of students with special needs poses challenges on me within inclusive settings.	3.0	CH
7	Limited parental involvement and support in reinforcing academic skills learned in the classroom impede the academic progress of students with special needs.	3.0	CH
8	Providing individual attention and tailored instructional methods to address specific learning challenges faced by students with special needs presents difficulties on me in mainstream classrooms.	2.9	CH
9	Addressing diverse learning styles and adapting teaching strategies to accommodate the varied academic needs of students with disabilities poses challenges on me in inclusive settings.	3.1	CH
10	Addressing emotional and social factors that impact learning and academic progress in students with special needs presents challenges on me within inclusive settings.	3.1	CH
Aggregate Weighted Mean		3.1	CH

Coordination and collaboration with support staff, aides, and specialists also pose difficulties, as reflected by a weighted mean of 3.0. Behavioral issues that affect focus and learning, along with limited parental involvement, similarly challenge teachers' efforts, both with a weighted mean of 3.0. Providing individualized attention and addressing diverse learning styles, which are crucial in inclusive classrooms, remain difficult tasks (WM = 2.9 and 3.1, respectively). Teachers also face challenges in assessing and monitoring students' academic progress (WM = 3.0) and addressing emotional and social factors that impact academic achievement (WM = 3.1). These findings emphasize the need for better resources, collaborative systems, and training to support teachers in meeting the academic needs of students with special needs in inclusive classrooms.

Table 5 highlights that teachers are generally "prepared" in implementing inclusive education to address the diverse needs of special education students, with an overall average weighted mean of 2.5.

Table 5. Preparedness level of the respondents in implementing Inclusive Education that address the diverse needs of Special Education students

No	Indicators	AWM	VD
1	Preparedness level in addressing students' self-efficacy	2.4	SP
2	Preparedness level in addressing self-help skills	2.6	P
3	Preparedness level in addressing students' social skills	2.5	P
4	Preparedness level in addressing academic skills	2.6	P
	Average Weighted Mean	2.5	P

Specifically, teachers were rated as "somewhat prepared" (SP) in addressing students' self-efficacy, with a weighted mean of 2.4, indicating limited readiness to build students' confidence and independence. In other areas, self-help skills (WM = 2.6), social skills (WM = 2.5), and academic skills (WM = 2.6) teachers were rated as "prepared", but only at a basic level. These findings suggest that while teachers have some level of preparedness, there is significant room for improvement, particularly in addressing self-efficacy, where they feel less equipped. Overall, the results underline the need for targeted training and capacity-building initiatives to enhance teachers' readiness for effectively supporting special education students in inclusive classrooms.

Table 6. Correlative inference between the challenges and preparedness level in implementing an inclusive education

Research Variables in Association	Wtd Mn.	Comp. rho	p-value	Results	Decision
Challenges and Preparedness in Self-efficacy	3.0 2.4	0.0619	0.8652	No significant correlation	H ₀ is not rejected
Challenges and Preparedness in Self-help skills	3.0 2.6	-0.0918	0.8009	No significant correlation	H ₀ is not rejected
Challenges and Preparedness in social skills	3.0 2.5	0.4066	0.2435	No significant correlation	H ₀ is not rejected
Challenges and Preparedness in academic skills	3.1 2.6	0.0959	0.7922	No significant correlation	H ₀ is not rejected

Two-tailed test at 0.05 level of significance

The data reveals no significant correlation between the challenges faced by teachers and their preparedness levels in implementing inclusive education across different areas. For self-efficacy, the computed rho value of 0.0619 and a p-value of 0.8652 indicate no significant relationship, suggesting that the challenges teachers face in fostering self-efficacy do not correspond to their preparedness

levels. Similarly, for self-help skills, the rho value of -0.0918 and p-value of 0.8009 also show no significant correlation. The same pattern is observed for social skills (rho = 0.4066, p = 0.2435) and academic skills (rho = 0.0959, p = 0.7922). Since all p-values are above the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis (H_0) is not rejected in all cases. This implies that teachers' perceived challenges are not directly linked to how prepared they feel to address those areas in inclusive education, highlighting a potential disconnect between challenges and preparedness. This finding suggests the need for further investigation into the factors influencing both challenges and preparedness to better support teachers.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that teachers face significant challenges in implementing inclusive education for students with special needs, particularly in addressing self-efficacy, self-help, social, and academic skills. Across all areas, the aggregate weighted means indicate that teachers are consistently "challenged", with notable difficulties in areas such as creating individualized learning plans, accessing specialized resources, and managing behavioral issues. For instance, limited access to resources for supporting self-efficacy and self-help skills highlights systemic barriers that hinder teachers' ability to cater to the unique needs of their students. These challenges are compounded by insufficient parental involvement and limited collaboration with support staff, which are critical for fostering a holistic and inclusive learning environment. These findings are consistent with other studies, which emphasize that teachers in inclusive classrooms often lack adequate resources, training, and institutional support to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities (Estrada Alarcón & Bravo Pineda, 2024).

Interestingly, while teachers were found to be "prepared" at a basic level in addressing areas such as self-help skills, social skills, and academic skills, there was no significant correlation between their preparedness and the challenges they face. This lack of correlation, as indicated by the high p-values in Table 6, suggests a disconnect between the professional development or training teachers have received and the practical difficulties they encounter in inclusive classrooms. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that while teachers may complete training programs, these often fail to equip them with the practical tools and strategies needed for real-world application (Vantieghem et al., 2023). The lack of alignment between challenges and preparedness underscores the need for targeted, context-specific professional development programs that address teachers' most pressing needs, such as access to specialized resources, individualized planning, and strategies for fostering collaboration with parents and support staff. Addressing these gaps is essential for enhancing the effectiveness of inclusive education practices and supporting the professional growth of educators.

Conclusion

The results of this study show that while teachers are somewhat prepared to implement inclusive education, they face significant challenges in addressing the diverse needs of students with special needs in inclusive classrooms. Key difficulties include limited access to resources, challenges in creating individualized learning plans, managing behavioral issues, and fostering collaboration with parents and support staff. Despite being rated as "prepared" in areas like self-help, social, and academic skills, there is no significant correlation between teachers' preparedness levels and the challenges they encounter. This suggests that existing training and resources may not adequately equip teachers to handle the practical realities of inclusive education. These findings highlight the need for improved support systems, targeted professional development, and greater resource allocation to ensure that teachers can effectively meet the needs of all students in inclusive settings.

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