

Article

Teachers' Perceptions, Collaborative Efforts, and Implementation Strategies in Inclusive Education

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Abstract: This study examined teachers' perceptions of inclusive education, collaborative efforts, and strategies for strengthening inclusive practices. A quantitative descriptive-correlational research design was employed involving 72 teaching personnel, including Kindergarten to Grade 6 teachers, Special Needs Education teachers, and the school principal, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a structured survey questionnaire and analyzed through frequency, percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, and Pearson product-moment correlation. Findings revealed favorable perceptions of inclusive education, collaborative efforts and strategies for improving inclusive education. Despite these favorable assessments, respondents expressed uncertainty regarding the effects of inclusion on other learners, clarity of professional roles, support from Special Needs Education teachers, and the adequacy of available resources. Results further showed a significant moderate positive relationship between perceptions of inclusive education and collaborative efforts, with a correlation coefficient of .581 and a probability value below .001. A significant moderate positive relationship was likewise found between perceptions of inclusive education and improvement strategies, with a correlation coefficient of .501 and a probability value below .001. The findings highlight the importance of clearly defined responsibilities, sustained collaboration, professional development, learner support, effective classroom management, and adequate resources in strengthening inclusive education. Based on the results, an intervention plan was proposed to reinforce institutional and professional support for inclusive practices at the school.

Keywords: inclusive education, teacher perceptions, collaborative efforts, implementation strategies, professional support, learner diversity

Introduction

Inclusive education promotes the right of all learners, regardless of disability, ability, background, or learning need, to participate meaningfully in quality education. Its successful implementation depends substantially on teachers because their beliefs, attitudes, professional competence, and willingness to collaborate influence how

effectively learner diversity is accommodated in regular classrooms. Guillemot et al. (2022), in a meta-analysis involving 40,512 teachers from 55 countries, found that teachers generally demonstrated favorable attitudes toward inclusive education, although these varied according to professional preparation, teaching assignment, and national context. Similarly, Dignath et al. (2022) emphasized that teachers' beliefs about inclusion were associated with their knowledge, experience, self-efficacy, and access to institutional support. These findings underscore the importance of examining teachers' perceptions because favorable attitudes alone may not guarantee effective inclusive practices without adequate preparation, collaboration, and resources.

Globally, inclusive education remains an important educational concern. UNICEF (2021) estimated that nearly 240 million children worldwide, or approximately one in every ten children, live with disabilities. Compared with children without disabilities, children with disabilities were reported to be 49 percent more likely never to have attended school and 42 percent less likely to possess foundational reading and numeracy skills. These disparities reflect persistent barriers involving inaccessible learning environments, inadequate instructional materials, discriminatory attitudes, inflexible curricula, limited professional support, and insufficient teacher preparation. UNESCO (2023) further emphasized that assistive technologies can expand educational access, although unequal availability and inadequate teacher competence in their use may limit their benefits.

These concerns are consistent with Sustainable Development Goal 4, which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. In particular, SDG Targets 4.5 and 4.a emphasize eliminating disparities in education and providing inclusive, safe, and disability-sensitive learning environments (United Nations, 2024). International organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF, together with professional organizations such as the Council for Exceptional Children and its Division for Early Childhood, continue to advocate accessible learning environments, evidence-based instructional practices, professional development, family participation, and collaboration among educators and other stakeholders. Supporting these priorities, Yada et al. (2022) found a positive association between teachers' self-efficacy and their attitudes toward inclusive education, while Jury et al. (2023) reported that concerns involving workload, classroom management, instructional demands, and insufficient resources were associated with less favorable perceptions of inclusion.

In the Philippines, the commitment to inclusive education was strengthened through Republic Act No. 11650, or the Instituting a Policy of Inclusion and Services for Learners with Disabilities in Support of Inclusive Education Act. The law mandates equitable access to quality education, reasonable accommodations, support services, teacher preparation, and the establishment of Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (Republic Act No. 11650, 2022). Despite this policy framework, challenges in implementation continue to involve the availability of trained personnel, accessible facilities, assistive technologies, specialized instructional materials, assessment

services, and professional support.

National statistics further demonstrate the magnitude of the concern. The Philippine Statistics Authority (2022) reported that 8,469,426 Filipinos aged five years and older, equivalent to 8.7 percent of the household population within this age group, had at least one functional difficulty. Although this figure did not represent school-age children exclusively, it reflected the substantial number of individuals who may require accessible and responsive public services. Moreover, EDCOM II (2025) estimated that approximately five million Filipino children with disabilities remained underserved, while about 60 percent of enrolled learners with disabilities lacked access to a Special Needs Education program, SPED center, Inclusive Learning Resource Center, or trained Special Needs Education teacher. These conditions emphasize the need to examine how inclusive education policies are translated into actual school-level practices.

At the provincial level, challenges related to teacher preparation, professional assistance, resources, and instructional adaptation have also been documented. Mariñas and Obiso (2025), in their investigation involving elementary teachers in Dumanjug District II, Cebu, found that teachers acknowledged the importance of inclusive education but experienced difficulties associated with inadequate specialized training and professional support. Parilla et al. (2024) likewise examined teachers' perceptions, collaborative efforts, and strategies for improving inclusive education in selected schools in Naga City, Cebu. These studies demonstrated that inclusive education has been an important concern within Cebu Province; however, school conditions, available resources, collaborative structures, and teachers' experiences may differ according to the specific educational environment.

Lipata Central Elementary School provided a particularly relevant setting for examining these concerns because it accommodated learners with diverse abilities and educational needs. Teachers worked with learners who differed in academic readiness, communication, behavior, attention, mobility, learning pace, and need for instructional assistance. Such diversity required teachers to respond through appropriate instructional adjustments, classroom-management practices, learner support, and coordination with Special Needs Education teachers, parents, school administrators, and other concerned professionals. Prior to the conduct of this study, however, limited school-level evidence was available regarding how teachers at Lipata Central Elementary School perceived inclusive education, how they viewed existing collaborative efforts, and what strategies they considered necessary for strengthening its implementation. Consequently, interventions could not be confidently designed around the teachers' actual perceptions and identified needs.

This limitation constituted the research gap addressed by the study. Although previous international, national, and Cebu-based studies had examined teachers' attitudes, preparedness, collaboration, and challenges in inclusive education, limited empirical evidence focused specifically on the relationship among teachers' perceptions toward inclusive education, collaborative efforts, and strategies for improvement at Lipata Central Elementary School. Generating localized evidence

was therefore necessary to determine the areas in which inclusive practices were perceived positively and those requiring stronger professional, institutional, and resource support.

Accordingly, the study assessed teachers' perceptions toward inclusive education at Lipata Central Elementary School during School Year 2026–2027 as the basis for an intervention plan. Specifically, it described the respondents according to age and gender, highest educational attainment, field of specialization, and length of service; determined their levels of perception toward inclusive education, collaborative efforts, and strategies for improvement; and examined whether significant relationships existed between their perceptions toward inclusive education and their perceptions of collaboration efforts and improvement strategies. The findings subsequently provided the empirical basis for proposing an intervention plan aimed at strengthening inclusive education practices within the school.

Literature Review

Teachers' perceptions and attitudes are consistently identified as important factors in the successful implementation of inclusive education. Guillemot, Lacroix, and Nocus (2022), in an extended meta-analysis involving 40,512 pre-service and in-service teachers from 55 countries, found that teachers generally held positive attitudes toward educating learners with disabilities in inclusive settings, although these attitudes differed according to contextual and professional factors. More recent studies have reinforced the importance of teacher self-efficacy in shaping such perceptions. Yada and Alnahdi (2024), in a comparative study of Saudi and Japanese in-service teachers, demonstrated that attitudes toward inclusive education and self-efficacy for inclusive practices are closely interconnected. Likewise, Elwakil (2024) found that social support was associated with both attitudes toward inclusion and self-efficacy among pre-service special education teachers, suggesting that teachers' confidence is strengthened when adequate professional and interpersonal support is available. Söderlund et al. (2024), examining teachers in Sweden, similarly highlighted the interrelationships among teachers' attitudes, self-efficacy, and collaboration in adapting instruction to accommodate diverse learning needs. Collectively, these studies indicate that favorable perceptions of inclusion cannot be viewed independently of teachers' confidence, preparation, professional experiences, and the support structures available within their educational environments.

Recent literature also emphasizes that effective inclusive education requires collaborative practices and sustained institutional support rather than relying solely on individual teacher commitment. Azevedo et al. (2025) reported that teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education were associated with self-efficacy and their perceptions of the school climate, underscoring the influence of organizational conditions on inclusive practice. Long, Sharma, and Subban (2025), through a meta-analysis focusing on teachers in mainland China, likewise identified a meaningful relationship between teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy toward inclusive education.

Shuakbayeva et al. (2025) further demonstrated that stronger self-efficacy was associated with greater readiness for inclusive teaching among pre-service teachers. More recent evidence suggests that collaboration may serve as an important mechanism linking teachers' beliefs to classroom practice. Bi et al. (2026) found that collaboration and attitudes helped explain the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and differentiated instructional practices, while Fu, Tao, and She (2026) showed that a supportive inclusive-education climate could contribute to differentiated instruction through teachers' efficacy and attitudes.

Methodology

The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to examine teachers' perceptions of inclusive education, collaborative efforts, and strategies for improving inclusive practices. It was conducted at Lipata Central Elementary School, a public elementary school in Linao-Lipata, Minglanilla, Cebu, Philippines. The respondents comprised 72 personnel, including Kindergarten to Grade 6 teachers, Special Needs Education teachers, and the school principal, selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in implementing, supporting, or supervising inclusive education. Data were collected using a structured survey questionnaire adapted from Ali, Mustapha, and Jelas (2006) and contextualized for the Philippine public-school setting. The instrument consisted of three sections: respondent profile, perceptions toward inclusive education, and collaborative efforts and strategies for improving inclusive education. The profile section gathered data on age, gender, highest educational attainment, field of specialization, and length of service. The remaining sections contained 18 indicators rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Negatively worded statements were retained in their original form and interpreted according to their substantive meaning, with higher agreement indicating a stronger perceived concern or barrier where applicable. Data collection followed preliminary, administration, and post-data-gathering phases. Required permissions, informed-consent procedures, confidentiality safeguards, and data-protection measures were observed in accordance with institutional research policies and the Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their rights before completing the questionnaire. Frequency counts and percentages were used to summarize respondent characteristics. Weighted means and standard deviations were computed to determine the levels and variability of perceptions, collaborative efforts, and improvement strategies. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was used to examine the strength and direction of relationships among the study variables. Statistical significance was evaluated at the 0.05 level, and data processing was conducted with statistical assistance to ensure accuracy and consistency.

Results

Table 1. Level of Perception of the Respondents Towards Inclusive Education

Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
Students with special needs are academically better in inclusive classrooms.	3.46	Positive
Students with special needs must be integrated into the regular community.	3.78	Positive
In order to achieve the highest level of inclusion, it is necessary for students with special needs to be placed in regular classes with back-up support.	3.82	Positive
The placement of students with special needs in regular classes negatively affects the academic performance of mainstream students.	3.08	Neutral
The academically talented students will be isolated in the inclusive classrooms.	2.63	Neutral
Students with special needs will benefit from the inclusive program in regular classrooms.	3.76	Positive
Students with special needs have the right to receive an education in mainstream classes.	3.93	Positive
Students with special needs will not be labeled as “stupid,” “weird,” or “hopeless” when placed in regular classrooms.	3.97	Positive
Aggregate Weighted Mean	3.55	Positive

Table 1 shows that respondents generally held a positive perception toward inclusive education, as reflected by the aggregate weighted mean of 3.55. The highest-rated indicator concerned avoiding negative labeling of students with special needs, followed by their right to education in mainstream classes. Respondents also recognized the benefits of inclusion and the importance of integrating learners with special needs into regular classrooms with appropriate support. However, neutral ratings were observed regarding the possible negative effects of inclusion on mainstream students and the potential isolation of academically talented learners. These findings imply that while teachers generally support inclusive education, some concerns remain about its classroom-level consequences. Schools should therefore strengthen teacher preparation, classroom support, differentiated instruction, and awareness programs to address misconceptions and promote more confident implementation of inclusive practices.

Table 2 indicates that respondents generally viewed collaboration efforts in inclusive education positively, as shown by the aggregate weighted mean of 3.61. The highest-rated indicator emphasized the need for special needs teachers and regular classroom teachers to work together, obtaining a very positive rating of 4.22. Respondents also positively recognized the responsibility of mainstream teachers toward learners with special needs. However, neutral ratings were recorded regarding objections from mainstream teachers, uncertainty about professional responsibilities, and the perception that special education

teachers only assist learners with special needs

Table 2. Level of Perception of the Respondents Towards Collaboration Efforts in Inclusive Education

Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
Special needs teachers and regular teachers need to work together in order to teach students with special needs in inclusive classrooms.	4.22	Very Positive
Although inclusive education is a good concept, its implementation is ineffective due to objections from the mainstream classroom teachers.	3.40	Neutral
Mainstream classroom teachers have the main responsibility towards students with special needs placed in their classrooms.	3.93	Positive
The presence of a special education teacher in the regular classrooms could raise difficulties in determining who really is responsible for the special students.	3.33	Neutral
The special education teacher only helps students with special needs.	3.14	Neutral
Aggregate Weighted Mean	3.61	Positive

These findings imply that collaboration is valued, but clearer role definitions and stronger coordination remain necessary. Schools should strengthen co-planning, shared decision-making, role clarification, and regular communication between general and special education teachers to improve inclusive practices.

Table 3. Level of Perception of the Respondents Towards Strategies to Improve Inclusive Education

Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
Mainstream classroom teachers have the training and skills to teach special needs students.	3.89	Positive
Special needs students need extra help and attention.	4.24	Very Positive
Students with special needs committed more disciplinary problems compared to the regular students.	3.46	Positive
Mainstream classroom teachers received little help from the special needs teachers.	3.35	Neutral
Although inclusive education is important, the resources for the students with special needs in a mainstream classroom are limited.	3.92	Positive
Aggregate Weighted Mean	3.77	Positive

Table 3 shows that respondents generally had positive perceptions of strategies for improving inclusive education, as reflected by the aggregate weighted mean of 3.77. The highest-rated indicator emphasized that students with special needs require additional help and attention, obtaining a very positive rating of 4.24. Respondents also positively perceived teachers' training and skills and acknowledged limitations in available resources. However, the neutral rating regarding assistance from special needs teachers suggests uncertainty about the adequacy of professional support. The positive rating concerning disciplinary problems also indicates a perceived classroom-management concern. These findings imply that improving inclusive education requires continuous teacher training, stronger collaboration with special education personnel, effective behavior-management strategies, individualized learner support, and sufficient instructional resources to address diverse educational needs effectively.

Table 4. Test of Relationship between the Respondents' Perception and Collaboration Efforts in Inclusive

Variables	r-value	Strength of Correlation	p-value	Decision	Remarks
Perception and Collaboration	0.581*	Moderate Positive	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant

Significant at $p < 0.05$, two-tailed.

Table 4 shows a statistically significant moderate positive relationship between respondents' perceptions of inclusive education and collaboration efforts, with an r-value of 0.581 and a p-value below 0.001. Since the p-value is lower than the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that more favorable perceptions of inclusive education tend to be associated with stronger perceptions of collaboration among teachers. The finding implies that positive attitudes toward inclusion may be reinforced when teachers experience effective teamwork, shared responsibilities, and professional support. Conversely, strengthening collaborative structures may also contribute to more favorable perceptions of inclusive practice. Schools should therefore promote regular co-planning, clear role assignments, consultation between general and special education teachers, and collaborative professional development to support effective inclusion.

Table 5. Test of Relationship between the Respondents' Perception and Strategies to Improve Inclusive Education

Variables	r-value	Strength of Correlation	p-value	Decision	Remarks
Perception and Strategies	0.501*	Moderate Positive	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant

Significant at $p < 0.05$, two-tailed.

Table 5 shows a statistically significant moderate positive relationship between respondents' perceptions of inclusive education and strategies for improving inclusive education, with an r-value of 0.501 and a p-value below 0.001. Since the p-value is lower than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates

that more favorable perceptions of inclusive education tend to be associated with stronger support for strategies intended to improve inclusive practices. The finding implies that teachers who view inclusion positively may also be more receptive to professional development, instructional support, classroom-management strategies, and resource enhancement. Schools should therefore strengthen teachers' knowledge, confidence, and access to practical support so that favorable perceptions can be translated into more consistent and effective inclusive practices.

Discussions

The findings indicate that teachers generally hold favorable views toward inclusive education and recognize its value in promoting the rights, participation, and social integration of learners with special needs. At the same time, the results reveal important reservations related to the possible effects of inclusion on other learners, the isolation of academically talented students, classroom behavior, limited resources, and the adequacy of support from special education personnel. These concerns suggest that positive attitudes alone are not sufficient to ensure effective implementation. Recent literature similarly emphasizes that teachers' confidence and inclusive practices are shaped by access to professional support, collaboration, training, and adequate resources. Franzen, Moschner, and Hellmich (2024) highlighted the importance of teacher self-efficacy in inclusive settings, while Bi et al. (2026) showed that collaboration and attitudes are closely linked with differentiated instructional practice. The findings therefore point to the need for sustained capacity-building, clear support systems, and sufficient instructional resources to help teachers translate favorable perceptions into consistent classroom practice.

The significant positive relationships found between perceptions of inclusive education, collaboration, and improvement strategies further suggest that these dimensions reinforce one another. Teachers who view inclusion more favorably also tend to value collaborative practices and support strategies intended to strengthen inclusive teaching. This pattern is consistent with recent research showing that school climate, professional cooperation, and teacher efficacy can influence the implementation of differentiated and inclusive practices. Fu, Tao, and She (2026) found that a supportive inclusive-education climate contributes to differentiated instruction through teachers' efficacy and attitudes, while Bi et al. (2026) identified collaboration as an important pathway linking teacher beliefs with practice. Taken together, the findings imply that school-based interventions should not focus only on changing individual attitudes. Greater attention should also be given to shared planning, clearer role expectations, professional development, behavior and instructional support, and equitable access to resources in order to strengthen inclusive education in a more coordinated and sustainable manner.

Conclusion

The study concluded that teachers at Lipata Central Elementary School generally

demonstrated favorable perceptions toward inclusive education, collaboration efforts, and strategies for improvement, although some uncertainties remained regarding the effects of inclusion on other learners, clarity of professional roles, adequacy of support, and availability of resources. The results of the hypothesis testing further showed that teachers' perceptions of inclusive education were significantly associated with their views on collaboration and improvement strategies. This indicates that effective inclusion depends not only on positive attitudes but also on shared responsibility, coordinated planning, professional support, appropriate training, and sufficient resources. In professional practice, these findings highlight the need to strengthen teachers' competencies in differentiated instruction, classroom management, learner assessment, individualized support, and collaborative planning. For program development and policy implementation, the results support the provision of sustained professional development, clearer role expectations, stronger stakeholder collaboration, adequate learning resources, and monitoring mechanisms. These measures can help translate favorable perceptions into more consistent, responsive, and sustainable inclusive education practices.

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