

# Teachers' Competency in Handling Learners with Special Educational Needs

Ma. Lowela S. Salarda., Regina E. Sitoy., Raymond C. Espina., Janine Joy L. Tenerife-Cañete., Reyland G. Capuno., John De Vera., Jemima M. Tandag., Irene O. Mamites

Cebu Technological University– Main Campus Cebu City, Philippines

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## ABSTRACT

Inclusive education is an essential approach to ensure that all learners, regardless of their abilities, receive equal opportunities to learn and succeed. This study used a convergent parallel mixed methods design to assess the competency of Key Stage 1 public school teachers in handling learners with special educational needs at Dao Elementary School, Tagbilaran City Schools Division, during the school year 2024–2025. Quantitative data were obtained through a validated survey questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews and examined through Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA). The findings revealed that teachers demonstrated a competent level of preparedness in managing learners with special educational needs. Among the areas assessed, attitudes obtained the highest mean score, followed by knowledge, while skills ranked lowest. There were no significant differences in competency when teachers were grouped according to age, specialization, length of service, or educational attainment. The major challenges identified included difficulty in managing learner behavior, heavy workload, lack of learning resources, limited special education training, and emotional exhaustion. Despite these concerns, teachers showed strong moral dedication and adaptability in addressing the needs of their learners. The study concludes that while teachers display positive attitudes toward inclusive education, there remain gaps in their technical and instructional competencies. An action plan was developed to strengthen teachers' competency through focused training, provision of appropriate resources, emotional and professional support, and institutional promotion of inclusive practices. The study emphasizes the need for continuous, skills-based professional development to improve inclusive teaching and uphold educational equity for learners with special needs.

**Keywords:** Inclusive Education, Teacher Competency, Learners with Special Educational Needs, Mixed Methods, Tagbilaran City, Philippines

## INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has emerged as a global movement aimed at providing equitable learning opportunities for all learners, regardless of their abilities, socio-economic status, or cultural background. It emphasizes the creation of learning environments where every child is valued, respected, and supported in reaching their full potential. The success of this approach largely depends on the preparedness and competency of teachers, whose ability to adapt instructional methods and classroom management strategies determines how effectively diverse learning needs are addressed. Teachers are expected to employ differentiated teaching approaches that promote both academic growth and holistic development among all learners (Sardar & Deb, 2023).

In the Philippine context, inclusive education is strongly anchored in national legislation and policy. The Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (Republic Act 10533) and the Department of Education's Inclusive Education Policy Framework mandate that all learners, including those with special educational needs, must have equal access to quality education. These frameworks affirm the government's commitment to educational equity and social inclusion. However, despite these initiatives, many Filipino teachers still face barriers in practicing inclusive education due to limited training opportunities, inadequate classroom resources, and insufficient infrastructure. Studies have consistently pointed out the need for focused professional development

and institutional support to strengthen teachers' capacity to manage inclusive classrooms effectively (Taylor et al., 2016).

At the provincial level, the implementation of inclusive education programs in Bohol has gained momentum but continues to face challenges. Variations in implementation across schools reveal that some teachers lack the skills, materials, and support systems necessary to cater to diverse learner needs. Infrastructure designed for learners with disabilities is often inadequate, and available training programs are not sufficient to equip teachers with specialized strategies for inclusive teaching (Ainley & Carstens, 2018). These limitations highlight the need for systematic efforts to enhance teacher preparedness and ensure that inclusive education policies are effectively translated into classroom practice.

In Tagbilaran City, the capital of Bohol, these challenges are particularly evident in Key Stage 1 (K1) classrooms. As the foundation of a learner's formal education, K1 plays a crucial role in shaping cognitive, social, and emotional development. Teachers at this level are expected to nurture essential literacy, numeracy, and life skills while addressing the individual differences of learners. Yet, many K1 teachers encounter significant challenges such as limited exposure to special education training, lack of adaptive learning materials, and minimal institutional support. These factors constrain their ability to effectively handle learners with special educational needs and to implement inclusive teaching practices in the classroom (Sardar & Deb, 2023).

Given this situation, the present study aims to assess the competency of Key Stage 1 teachers in handling learners with special educational needs within the Tagbilaran City Schools Division. It seeks to identify gaps in professional training, availability of instructional resources, and institutional support systems, and to recommend strategies for improving teachers' preparedness for inclusive education. By addressing these areas, the study hopes to contribute to the continuous development of an inclusive, equitable, and learner-centered education system in Tagbilaran City, thereby promoting quality learning for all children.

## Legal Basis

Inclusive Education (IE) in the Philippines is grounded in both global and national frameworks that ensure equitable access to quality education. Aligned with UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 on inclusive and lifelong learning (United Nations, 2015) and anchored in the 1987 Philippine Constitution, inclusive education is recognized as a human right and a national priority. Laws such as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (RA 10533) mandate learner-centered and inclusive instruction, while the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons (RA 7277) and its amendment RA 9442 ensure the rights and integration of persons with disabilities in mainstream education. Most recently, the Inclusive Education Act for Learners with Disabilities (RA 11650, 2022) institutionalized inclusive practices through the establishment of Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (ILRCs) that provide assessments, individualized education plans, and teacher training.

The law adopts a whole-of-community approach that fosters collaboration among schools, families, local government units, and other stakeholders. It aligns with international conventions, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), and underscores the principles of accessibility, reasonable accommodation, and inter-agency coordination among the Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Health (DOH), and Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to ensure inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all learners (Republic Act No. 11650, 2022).

To implement these provisions, the Department of Education Order No. 44, s. 2021, or the *Guidelines on the Implementation of the Expanded Inclusive Education Program for Learners with Disabilities*, highlights teacher preparedness as a key element in inclusive education. It calls for ongoing professional development to help teachers acquire the skills needed to manage inclusive classrooms, design and implement Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and collaborate with Special Education (SPED) specialists. The order also emphasizes access to appropriate teaching materials and encourages partnerships that strengthen instructional practices and promote sustainable inclusion (Department of Education, 2021).

Collectively, these legal frameworks affirm the Philippines' strong commitment to achieving inclusive education consistent with global standards. They emphasize that teacher competency, continuous professional development, and systemic support are vital in building inclusive schools that uphold equity, respect, and quality learning for all.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study aimed to assess the competency in handling learners with special educational needs among Key Stage 1 public school teachers at Dao Elementary School, Tagbilaran City Division. The results of this research could be beneficial for school administrators, teachers, parents, learners, researcher and future researchers.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study aimed to assess the competency in handling learners with special educational needs among Key Stage 1 public school teachers at Dao Elementary School, Tagbilaran City Division as basis for an action plan.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the respondents' profile in terms of:
  - 1.1 age and gender;
  - 1.2 area of specialization;
  - 1.3 length of service;
  - 1.4 highest educational attainment; and
  - 1.5 trainings and seminars attended in inclusive education?
2. What is the respondents' level of competency in handling learners with special needs in terms of:
  - 2.1 knowledge;
  - 2.2 attitude;
  - 2.3 skills;
3. Is there a significant difference in the respondents' level of competency in handling learners with special needs when grouped according to the identified profile?
4. What are the perceived challenges of the respondents in handling learners with special needs?
5. What action plan may be proposed based on the findings?

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This section presents the research design, study flow, research setting, respondents, instruments, data collection procedures, statistical treatments, and scoring methods utilized to accomplish the objectives of the study.

### **Research Design**

The study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design to evaluate the competency of Key Stage 1 public school teachers in handling learners with special educational needs. In this design, quantitative and qualitative data were gathered and analyzed simultaneously but treated as distinct strands.

The quantitative phase focused on determining teachers' competency levels and examining differences based on their demographic characteristics, while the qualitative phase explored the challenges, experiences, and contextual factors influencing their ability to support learners with special needs through in-depth interviews.

## Environment

The study will be conducted at Dao Elementary School, which is part of the Tagbilaran City Division under the Department of Education. The school is situated along J.A. Clarin Street, Tagbilaran City, Bohol. It is classified as a medium-sized public elementary school, serving a total population of approximately 740 learners for the School Year 2024–2025.

Dao Elementary School provides education from Kindergarten to Grade 6 and is committed to implementing inclusive practices that cater to the diverse learning needs of its students. Its teaching and administrative staff actively participate in capacity-building activities organized by the division, making it a suitable setting for a study on teacher competency in managing learners with special educational needs.

## Respondents

The respondents of this study will include all **Key Stage 1 teachers** currently teaching at **Dao Elementary School**, Tagbilaran City Division, for **School Year 2024–2025**. These teachers handle learners from **Kindergarten to Grade 3**. A total of **fourteen (14)** teachers will participate in the quantitative phase of the study, representing the entire population of Key Stage 1 teachers through **total enumeration sampling**.

## Instrument

A survey questionnaire served as the primary tool for quantitative data collection. It was adapted from two previous studies on inclusive education: Razalli et al. (2021), which examined the preparedness of special education teachers for inclusive education, and Ecoben (2019), which assessed the competency of public-school teachers for inclusion.

The questionnaire comprised four parts: (1) the demographic profile of the respondents, (2) competency levels in terms of knowledge, attitude, and skills, (3) challenges encountered in managing learners with special educational needs, and (4) recommendations for improving inclusive practices. The instrument underwent expert validation by specialists in inclusive education to ensure content accuracy and contextual appropriateness. It was also pilot-tested to establish its reliability, clarity, and suitability for the study's purpose.

For the qualitative phase, a semi-structured interview guide was developed to obtain in-depth insights from selected teachers. The guide consisted of open-ended questions focusing on teachers' experiences, perceptions, challenges, and strategies in implementing inclusive education. It was reviewed by field experts to confirm that the items were clear, relevant, and aligned with the study objectives.

## Data Gathering Procedure

**Preliminary Stage.** During the preliminary stage, all ethical research protocols were strictly followed, including informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and respect for respondent autonomy. Formal authorization was obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent and the school principal of Dao Elementary School to conduct the study.

For the quantitative phase, survey questionnaires were prepared and distributed to Key Stage 1 teachers. Each respondent received an informed consent form explaining the study's objectives, procedures, and their rights, including the freedom to withdraw from participation at any point without penalty.

For the qualitative phase, five (5) teachers were purposively selected based on their teaching experience, exposure to inclusive education practices, and willingness to participate. Ethical standards were consistently observed to maintain transparency, integrity, and respect throughout this stage.

**Data Collection Stage.** During data collection, the survey questionnaires were distributed to respondents in both printed and digital formats, with clear instructions for completion. All accomplished questionnaires were checked for accuracy and completeness, and data confidentiality was strictly upheld.

In the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted either face-to-face or virtually, depending on the respondents' preference and availability. Each interview was audio-recorded only with the respondents' explicit consent. The researcher-maintained neutrality and created a respectful environment to encourage open and reflective discussions.

**Post-Collection Stage.** Following data collection, ethical standards continued to guide all research activities. Quantitative responses were encoded, verified, and processed using appropriate statistical software for analysis. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, anonymized to protect respondents' identities, and analyzed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis. Both quantitative and qualitative datasets were examined separately before being integrated to produce a comprehensive interpretation of teachers' competency and competency in inclusive education.

### Statistical Treatment

The gathered data from the survey and interview responses were organized and tabulated in a master data sheet. Assistance from a statistician was sought to analyze the results using appropriate statistical tools. The following statistical tools was utilized:

**Frequency Count.** This tool identifies the number of respondents within specific demographic categories and their preparedness levels. It provides absolute (actual number) and relative (percentage) totals.

**Percentage.** This tool calculates the proportion of respondents exhibiting certain characteristics or preparedness levels, expressed as a fraction of 100.

**Mean and Standard Deviation.** These tools measure the central tendency and variability of the respondents' preparedness levels in handling learners with special needs.

**Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).** This tool tests for significant differences in preparedness across various demographic variables.

**Post-hoc Analysis.** This tool identifies specific group differences when significant results are observed in the ANOVA.

For the qualitative data, **Reflexive Thematic Analysis** as developed by Braun and Clarke was utilized to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns or themes in the data. This method involves an iterative process, including familiarization with the data, coding, generating initial themes, reviewing and refining themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up the analysis. Reflexive thematic analysis ensures flexibility and depth, allowing the researcher to capture the nuanced challenges and suggestions shared by respondents. The qualitative insights are integrated with the quantitative findings, providing a richer understanding of the competency of Key Stage 1 teachers in managing learners with special needs.

### Ethical Consideration

To uphold the highest ethical standards, this study complied with established guidelines for educational research and adhered to the principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Prior to the commencement of data collection, formal permission was obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent of Tagbilaran City and the school principal of Dao Elementary School. Ethical clearance was also sought from the appropriate institutional review authority to ensure that the study met the requirements for research involving human respondents.

Informed consent was obtained from all respondents before participation. Each respondent was clearly informed of the study's purpose, objectives, procedures, and expected duration, as well as the potential



benefits and minimal risks involved. They were also assured of their voluntary participation and were informed of their right to decline or withdraw from the study at any time without facing any form of penalty or disadvantage.

To protect confidentiality and anonymity, no personal identifiers were collected. All responses were coded numerically, and individual data were not disclosed in any form throughout analysis or reporting. The researcher ensured that information shared during both the survey and the interviews was treated with the highest level of discretion. All data were stored securely in password-protected files and accessible only to the researcher and authorized personnel directly involved in the analysis.

The study observed strict compliance with the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173). Collected data were used solely for academic purposes and exclusively for achieving the objectives stated in the research. After the completion of the study, all raw data—both electronic and printed—were permanently deleted or destroyed to safeguard respondent privacy.

A debriefing session was conducted after data collection to inform respondents of the study's outcomes, clarify any questions, and provide them with an opportunity to express feedback or concerns. Respondents were reassured that the findings would be used to promote professional growth, institutional development, and the advancement of inclusive education practices.

Throughout all stages of the research process, the study maintained a strong commitment to transparency, confidentiality, voluntary participation, informed consent, and respect for the rights, dignity, and welfare of all respondents, ensuring compliance with both institutional and national ethical research standards.

## RESULTS

This section sequentially presents the analysis and interpretation of the study which aimed to determine the Competency of Key Stage 1 Public School Teachers in handling learners with special needs in Dao Elementary School, Tagbilaran City Schools Division, Bohol Province, for the school year 2024-2025. The goal is to propose an action plan based on the findings.

### Demographic Profile

#### Age and Gender

Table 2 presents the age and gender distribution of the respondents, revealing that all 14 respondents were female, with no male respondents recorded.

Table 2 Age and Gender of the Respondents

Age (in years)	Female f	Female %	Male f	Male %	Total f	Total %
51–60	3	21.43	0	0.00	3	21.43
41–50	5	35.71	0	0.00	5	35.71
31–40	3	21.43	0	0.00	3	21.43
20–30	3	21.43	0	0.00	3	21.43
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The majority (35.71%) were aged 41–50, followed equally by those in the 31–40, 20–30, and 51–60 age brackets, each comprising 21.43% of the sample. This suggests a diverse age distribution among female respondents, with a significant concentration in the mid-career age group (41–50). The absence of male respondents highlights a gender imbalance, indicating that perspectives in this study are drawn solely from

female respondents, which may reflect the gender composition of the teaching workforce or a limitation in sampling.

The complete absence of male respondents in this sample mirrors broader trends in early childhood and primary education, where female dominance in the workforce is well-documented. According to (King & Hopson, 2020), gender imbalance in primary education persists globally due to societal perceptions of teaching young children as a predominantly female profession. While a mid-career concentration (ages 41–50) may provide advantages in terms of experience and stability, the lack of male perspectives can influence classroom environments, role modeling, and the broader inclusivity culture. This demographic profile suggests the need for initiatives aimed at encouraging greater gender diversity in the teaching profession, alongside leveraging the strengths of experienced female educators to promote inclusive education effectively.

### Area of Specialization

Table 3 presents the area of specialization of the respondents.

Table 3Area of Specialization of the Respondents

Area of Specialization	F	%
Early Childhood Education	2	14.29
General Content	9	64.29
English	1	7.14
Filipino	1	7.14
TLE	1	7.14
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The majority, comprising 64.29% ( $f=9$ ), specialized in General Content, indicating that most of the respondents possess broad teaching backgrounds applicable to various learning areas.

Early Childhood Education follows with 14.29% ( $f=2$ ), reflecting a smaller yet significant portion of teachers trained specifically to handle younger learners. The remaining respondents specialized in English, Filipino, and Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE), each accounting for 7.14% ( $f=1$ ). This distribution suggests that while a variety of specializations are represented, there is a strong concentration in generalist teaching fields.

The dominance of General Content specialization among respondents reflects a common trend where broad pedagogical training may not sufficiently address the complexities of inclusive education. A study by (Sharma et al., 2022) emphasized that generalist teachers often feel less prepared to support diverse learning needs compared to those with specialized training in areas such as Early Childhood or Special Education.

While a broad teaching background offers flexibility, it may lack the depth required to effectively implement inclusive practices, especially for students with disabilities or learning difficulties. This suggests the importance of providing targeted professional development and specialized certification opportunities to enhance the capacity of generalist teachers in delivering truly inclusive education.

### Length of Service

Table 4 displays the length of service of the 14 respondents. The data reveal that the respondents have varied teaching experience.

Table 4 Length of Service of the Respondents

Length of Service (in years)	f	%
More than 20	4	28.57
16–20	3	21.43
11–15	1	7.14
6–10	2	14.29
1–5	4	28.57
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100.00</b>

A notable portion, 28.57% ( $f=4$ ), have been in service for more than 20 years, indicating a significant level of professional experience. The same percentage, 28.57% ( $f=4$ ), are relatively new in the profession, having served 1 to 5 years, suggesting a mix of seasoned and early-career teachers in the group. Meanwhile, 21.43% ( $f=3$ ) have 16 to 20 years of experience, and 14.29% ( $f=2$ ) have been teaching for 6 to 10 years. Only 7.14% ( $f=1$ ) have served for 11 to 15 years. This distribution indicates a balanced composition of respondents with both veteran insights and fresh perspectives in the field of education.

The varied length of service among respondents, with notable groups both above 20 years and within 1–5 years of experience, reflects a healthy balance of veteran and early-career teachers. According to (Bayar & Ucanok, 2020), while extensive teaching experience enhances classroom management and traditional instructional skills, it does not automatically equip teachers with competencies required for inclusive education unless accompanied by continuous professional development.

Similarly, early-career teachers often bring innovative practices but may lack depth in handling diverse learning needs without adequate training. This highlights the implication that both seasoned and novice educators need ongoing, inclusive-focused capacity-building programs to ensure that experience is complemented by up-to-date pedagogical strategies necessary for addressing the needs of all learners, particularly in inclusive settings.

**Highest Educational Attainment.** Table 5 outlines the highest educational attainment of the 14 respondents. Half of the respondents, 50.00% ( $f=7$ ), have attained only a bachelor's degree, indicating that while they meet the basic qualification for teaching, there may still be room for academic advancement.

Table 5 Highest Educational Attainment of the Respondents

Educational Attainment	F	%
With Doctorate Units	1	7.14
Master's Graduate	2	14.29
With Master's Units	4	28.57
Bachelor's Degree	7	50.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100.00</b>

A significant portion, 28.57% ( $f=4$ ), are pursuing graduate studies, having earned Master's units, while 14.29% ( $f=2$ ) have completed their Master's degree, showing a level of professional growth. Only 7.14% ( $f=1$ )



hold Doctorate units, reflecting minimal representation at the doctoral level. This distribution suggests that while there is a presence of graduate-level education among the respondents, the majority are still at or below the master's level, highlighting the potential need for further academic and professional development.

The educational profile of the respondents, where half hold only a bachelor's degree and a minority have pursued graduate studies, underscores the ongoing need for academic advancement in the teaching profession. A study by (Alnahdi, 2020) emphasized that higher academic qualifications, particularly at the master's and doctoral levels, significantly enhance teachers' preparedness for inclusive education by deepening their pedagogical knowledge and critical thinking skills.

Teachers with only undergraduate qualifications may meet the basic standards but often lack advanced competencies essential for addressing diverse and complex classroom needs. This finding implies that while the pursuit of higher education among some respondents is promising, there is a critical need to support and incentivize further academic progression, particularly in special education and inclusive practices, to strengthen the overall capacity of the teaching workforce.

### Seminars and Trainings Attended

Table 6 shows that all 14 respondents (100.00%) have attended seminars and trainings, indicating full participation in professional development activities.

Table 6 Respondents' Attendance to Seminars and Trainings

Attendance	f	%
Have Attended	14	100.00
Not Attended	0	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100.00</b>

This universal attendance reflects a strong commitment among the respondents to continuous learning and capacity building. The result suggests that the respondents have had opportunities to update their knowledge and skills, which may contribute positively to their teaching practices, especially in adapting to educational reforms and addressing the diverse needs of learners.

The 100% attendance rate in seminars and trainings among respondents demonstrates a commendable commitment to professional growth, an essential factor for improving inclusive teaching practices. However, as (Moberg et al., 2020) highlight, the mere participation in professional development activities does not guarantee effective practice change unless the trainings are intensive, contextually relevant, and supported by continuous follow-up mechanisms.

Generic or surface-level seminars may increase awareness but often fail to equip teachers with the deep, practical skills necessary for true inclusive education. Therefore, while full participation is a positive starting point, the implication is that the quality, depth, and sustainability of these trainings must be prioritized to ensure that teachers can effectively translate learning into classroom strategies that genuinely meet the needs of all students.

### Level Of Competency In Handling Learners With Special Educational Needs

#### Knowledge

Table 7 shows that teachers are generally *competent/prepared* in terms of knowledge in handling learners with special educational needs (LSENs), as reflected by the aggregate mean of 3.55 (SD = 0.89).

Table 7 Level of Competency in Handling Learners with special needs in Terms of Knowledge

Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1. I have received training or courses related to supporting pupils with special education needs in inclusive classrooms.	3.64	1.08	Competent/Prepared
2. I am familiar with different types of programs (e.g., Full or Partial Inclusion) suitable for pupils with special education needs.	3.29	0.99	Moderately Competent/Prepared
3. I can identify the characteristics and criteria of pupils who require special education services.	3.57	0.76	Competent/Prepared
4. I know how SPED specialists support teachers through consultations, classroom interventions, and training sessions.	3.36	0.84	Moderately Competent/Prepared
5. I am knowledgeable about policies and procedures that promote inclusive education in my school.	3.36	0.84	Moderately Competent/Prepared
6. I am familiar with assistive technologies and learning apps that can support pupils with special education needs.	3.43	0.94	Competent/Prepared
7. I understand the role of parents in reinforcing inclusive education strategies at home.	3.86	0.86	Competent/Prepared
8. I am aware of the impact of administrative support on the implementation of inclusive education.	3.93	0.83	Competent/Prepared
<b>Aggregate Mean</b>	<b>3.55</b>	<b>0.89</b>	<b>Competent/Prepared</b>

The highest-rated indicator pertains to awareness of administrative support's impact on inclusive education ( $M = 3.93$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ), followed closely by understanding the role of parents in supporting inclusive strategies at home. These results suggest that respondents are confident in recognizing the collaborative roles of stakeholders in inclusive practices. On the other hand, the lowest-rated item, with a mean score of 3.29 ( $SD = 0.99$ ), involves familiarity with inclusion program types, indicating a moderate level of competence in this technical aspect.

A closer analysis reveals a trend where respondents feel more equipped with general and stakeholder-related knowledge than with technical and policy-specific content. Moderate ratings were observed in areas related to program familiarity, SPED consultation processes, and institutional policies. This implies that while foundational awareness is present, there is a need for more structured training on specialized and procedural knowledge. These findings align with literature highlighting the gap between inclusive values and the application of formal frameworks (Sharma & Mullick, 2020), pointing to the importance of sustained professional development to bridge this divide.

## Attitudes

As shown in Table 8, the respondents demonstrated a generally *competent* level of competency in terms of their attitudes toward handling learners with special educational needs, with an aggregate mean of 3.87 ( $SD = 0.92$ ). The highest-rated item reflects a *highly competent* attitude toward using technology and learning apps to enhance inclusive education ( $M = 4.21$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ), suggesting a strong openness to digital tools as enablers of inclusive practices. Positive attitudes were also evident in areas such as willingness to support inclusive strategies and seeking out resources. The lowest-rated item, however, pertains to the perception of stress when

supporting pupils with special needs ( $M = 3.36$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ), indicating a moderate level of emotional competence.

Table 8 Level of Competency in Handling Learners with Special Educational Needs in Terms of Attitudes

Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1. I am happy to support the implementation of strategies for pupils with special education needs in my classroom.	4.14	0.77	Competent/Prepared
2. I understand what needs to be done to effectively assist pupils with special education needs.	3.93	1.00	Competent/Prepared
3. I feel confident that strategies for addressing special education needs are manageable in a Key Stage 1 setting.	3.50	1.02	Competent/Prepared
4. Supporting pupils with special education needs does not cause me excessive stress.	3.36	1.22	Moderately Competent/Prepared
5. I regularly seek out resources and strategies to better support pupils with special education needs.	4.00	0.78	Competent/Prepared
6. I feel motivated to overcome institutional barriers to ensure all pupils have equitable learning opportunities.	3.86	0.77	Competent/Prepared
7. I am confident that collaboration with SPED specialists improves teaching outcomes for pupils with special education needs.	3.93	1.00	Competent/Prepared
8. I believe that using technology and learning apps enhances the effectiveness of inclusive education.	4.21	0.80	Highly Competent/Prepared
<b>Aggregate Mean</b>	<b>3.87</b>	<b>0.92</b>	<b>Competent/Prepared</b>

The trend indicates that while teachers exhibit enthusiasm and motivation to support inclusive practices, they may still experience emotional strain in the process. Most attitude-related indicators scored above 3.50, reflecting a generally favorable disposition toward inclusion. The findings imply that Key Stage 1 teachers possess a generally positive and competent attitude toward inclusive education, particularly in embracing technology and collaboration; however, moderate emotional strain related to supporting learners with special educational needs suggests the need for ongoing emotional resilience-building and stress management support to sustain their commitment to inclusive practices.

The results align with findings from Sahli Lozano et al. (2024), which emphasize that positive attitudes are key predictors of successful inclusive education implementation. Nevertheless, the relatively lower rating on stress management suggests a need for emotional support mechanisms, such as peer mentoring or wellness programs, to help teachers cope with the psychological demands of inclusive teaching.

## Skills

Table 9 reveals that the respondents are generally *competent/prepared* in terms of skills for handling learners with special educational needs (LSENs), with an aggregate mean of 3.42 ( $SD = 0.79$ ).

Table 9 Level of Competency in Handling Learners with Special Educational Needs in Terms of Skills

Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1. I develop personal skills such as empathy, patience, and care to better	3.79	0.80	Competent/Prepared

support Key Stage 1 pupils with special education needs.			
2. I demonstrate flexibility in addressing pupils' unique needs, such as accommodating deadlines, absences, and additional support.	3.79	0.70	Competent/Prepared
3. I develop Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) tailored to the needs of Key Stage 1 pupils with special education requirements.	3.29	0.91	Moderately Competent/Prepared
4. I implement Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) throughout the school year to monitor and support the progress of pupils with special education needs.	3.21	0.80	Moderately Competent/Prepared
5. I teach and mentor Key Stage 1 pupils through whole-class instruction, small group sessions, and one-on-one support as needed.	3.21	0.70	Moderately Competent/Prepared
6. I assess Key Stage 1 pupils' skills to identify their needs and develop appropriate teaching plans to address those needs.	3.43	0.85	Competent/Prepared
7. I help Key Stage 1 pupils with special education needs transition effectively between year levels and prepare them for future learning stages.	3.36	0.84	Moderately Competent/Prepared
8. I regularly integrate SPED specialists' recommendations into my lesson planning and teaching practices.	3.00	0.68	Moderately Competent/Prepared
9. I use differentiated instruction techniques to meet the needs of diverse learners in my classroom.	3.36	0.84	Moderately Competent/Prepared
10. I address institutional barriers by advocating for resources and support systems for inclusive education.	3.50	0.76	Competent/Prepared
11. I consult with SPED specialists to enhance my strategies for managing pupils with special education needs.	3.43	0.76	Competent/Prepared
12. I implement classroom management techniques that promote an inclusive learning environment.	3.71	0.73	Competent/Prepared
13. I assess the impact of my teaching strategies on the well-being and academic performance of pupils with special education needs.	3.43	0.94	Competent/Prepared
<b>Aggregate Mean</b>	<b>3.42</b>	<b>0.79</b>	<b>Competent/Prepared</b>

The highest-rated indicators include personal development of traits such as empathy and flexibility (both  $M = 3.79$ ), suggesting that teachers value socio-emotional competencies as essential tools in inclusive education. On the other hand, the lowest-rated item pertains to the integration of SPED specialists' recommendations in lesson planning ( $M = 3.00$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ), indicating a *moderately competent* level and highlighting a gap in collaborative and applied instructional planning.

A pattern emerges wherein respondents express stronger competence in general teaching dispositions and classroom management but reveal moderate proficiency in more technical tasks such as developing and implementing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Skills related to assessment, collaboration with SPED professionals, and differentiated instruction also fall within the moderately competent range. This suggests a partial competency that leans more toward personal and instructional attitudes than formalized inclusive teaching practices.

The findings imply that while Key Stage 1 teachers show strong competence in socio-emotional and classroom management for inclusive education, gaps remain in technical skills such as implementing IEPs, differentiated instruction, and collaboration with SPED specialists, highlighting the need for more specialized, practice-based training to fully equip them for inclusive teaching.

These findings support the study of Ní Bhroin & King (2020), which argued that while inclusive attitudes are critical, skills development—especially in instructional planning and collaboration is vital for effective inclusive teaching. Professional development programs should therefore emphasize capacity-building in technical competencies to bridge this skills gap.

## Summary

Competency in Handling Learners with Special Educational Needs. Table 10 presents a summary of respondents' overall competency in handling learners with special educational needs (LSENs), with a grand mean of 3.61 (SD = 0.87), interpreted as "Competent."

Table 10 Level of Competency in Handling Learners with Special Educational Needs

Component	WM	SD	Verbal Description
Knowledge	3.55	0.89	Competent/Prepared
Attitudes	3.87	0.92	Competent/Prepared
Skills	3.42	0.79	Competent/Prepared
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>3.61</b>	<b>0.87</b>	<b>Competent/Prepared</b>

Among the three components, attitudes recorded the highest weighted mean ( $M = 3.87$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ), indicating a strong disposition and openness among teachers toward inclusive practices. Knowledge followed with a mean of 3.55 ( $SD = 0.89$ ), showing foundational awareness of inclusive education principles and stakeholder roles. Meanwhile, the skills component, while still categorized as "Competent," obtained the lowest mean ( $M = 3.42$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ), suggesting relatively lower confidence in implementing technical strategies such as IEP development, SPED collaboration, and differentiated instruction. These results imply that while teachers generally support inclusive education and understand its value, there remains a crucial need to strengthen their technical competence through targeted capacity-building initiatives.

The findings imply that while Key Stage 1 teachers in Tagbilaran City are generally competent to handle learners with special needs, particularly in their attitudes and foundational knowledge, their lower technical skill levels highlight the need for focused capacity-building efforts to enhance practical competencies essential for effective inclusive education.

Interestingly, recent research confirms that teachers' competencies for inclusive education must integrate all three core dimensions: knowledge, attitudes, and skills. A study by Baguisa and Ang-Manaig (2019) demonstrated that while teachers often exhibit positive attitudes toward inclusion, gaps in technical skills and instructional planning persist. The study emphasized that improving knowledge and skills particularly through training and collaboration is essential to ensuring that inclusive education is implemented effectively and not just supported in principle.

## Significant Difference In Respondents' Level Of Competency

### Age

As presented in Table 11, the one-way ANOVA results show that there is no statistically significant difference in the level of competency of respondents based on their age,  $F(2, 11) = 0.215$ ,  $p = .810$ .



Table 11 ANOVA Results on Competency Based on Respondents' Age

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Result
Between Groups	0.213	2	0.107	0.215	.810	Not Significant
Within Groups	5.461	11	0.496			
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.674</b>	<b>13</b>				

The  $p$ -value is greater than the significance level of 0.05, indicating that age does not appear to be a determining factor in how prepared the respondents feel in handling learners with special educational needs (LSENs). This result suggests that regardless of age, respondents tend to have similar levels of competencies across knowledge, attitudes, and skills domains.

This finding aligns with research by Radojlović et al. (2022), which found no statistically significant differences in attitudes toward inclusive education when comparing teachers by age, gender, or years of service (Radojlović et al., 2022). These results highlight that competency for inclusion may depend more on training and experience than on demographic factors like age.

### Field of Specialization

As shown in Table 12, the ANOVA results indicate no statistically significant difference in the level of competency based on the respondents' field of specialization,  $F(1, 12) = 1.775$ ,  $p = .208$ . Since the  $p$ -value exceeds the 0.05 threshold, it suggests that specialization—whether in general education, early childhood, or other fields—does not significantly influence perceived competencies in handling learners with special educational needs (LSENs).

Table 12 ANOVA Results on Competency Based on Field of Specialization

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Result
Between Groups	0.731	1	0.731	1.775	.208	Not Significant
Within Groups	4.943	12	0.412			
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.674</b>	<b>13</b>				

This result implies a level of uniformity in competency across specializations, possibly due to shared institutional initiatives or similar professional development exposures. It supports the findings of Sharma and Sokal (2020), who emphasized that the quality and content of inclusive training programs are more influential in shaping teachers' competencies than their initial field of study. The result further underscores the importance of inclusive education training being integrated across all specializations, ensuring that all teachers, regardless of background, are equally equipped to support diverse learners.

### Length of Service

As presented in Table 13, the ANOVA results show no statistically significant difference in the level of competency based on respondents' length of service,  $F(2, 11) = 0.946$ ,  $p = .418$ . Since the  $p$ -value exceeds the standard alpha level of 0.05, it can be concluded that teaching experience—whether short-term, mid-level, or long-term—does not significantly influence perceived competency in handling learners with special educational needs (LSENs).

Table 13 ANOVA Results on Competency Based on Length of Service

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Remark
Between Groups	0.832	2	0.416	0.946	.418	Not Significant
Within Groups	4.842	11	0.440			
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.674</b>	<b>13</b>				

This finding suggests that regardless of years in the profession, teachers report similar levels of competency in knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to inclusive education. Such results support the conclusion of Razalli et al. (2021), who found no significant differences in inclusive education competency across teaching experience levels, emphasizing instead the need for continuous professional development for all educators. This highlights the importance of ongoing training programs over mere years of service in fostering inclusive competencies.

### Educational Attainment

As shown in Table 14, the ANOVA results indicate no statistically significant difference in the level of competency based on educational attainment,  $F(1, 12) = 0.186$ ,  $p = .674$ .

Table 14 ANOVA Results on Competency Based on Educational Attainment

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Remark
Between Groups	0.086	1	0.086	0.186	.674	Not Significant
Within Groups	5.588	12	0.466			
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.674</b>	<b>13</b>				

Since the p-value exceeds the 0.05 significance level, it can be concluded that the level of academic qualification—whether bachelor's or postgraduate—does not significantly influence perceived competency in handling learners with special educational needs (LSENs). This finding suggests that regardless of formal educational attainment, teachers perceive similar levels of competency across the domains of knowledge, attitudes, and skills. This result echoes the findings of Zainalabidin and Ma'rof (2021), who reported that while attitudes and self-efficacy are significant predictors of competency for inclusive education, academic qualifications alone do not guarantee competency without adequate practical training and support.

### Perceived Challenges In Handling Learners With Special Educational Needs

#### Challenges in Handling Learners with Special Educational Needs

Table 15 presents the generated themes on the narratives of the respondents on their challenges in handling learners with special educational needs.

Table 15. Thematic Grid on the Perceived Challenges in Handling Learners with Special Educational Needs

Theme	Subthemes	Description of the Theme	Sample Data Extract (Verbatim)
1. Behavioral Management as a Constant Struggle	Unpredictable tantrums, aggression, classroom disruptions	Teachers struggle to manage frequent disruptive behaviors without proper training.	"Short attention span, no retention... dili mamati kung buyagon."
2. Instructional	Double workload,	Teachers are burdened by the	"Murag ga doble sa

Burden and Time Constraints	differentiated tasks, insufficient time	need to tailor instruction for LSENs alongside regular learners.	trabaho...balikon napod the next day.”
3. Lack of Resources and Structural Support	Absence of assistive tools, shadow teachers, minimal support	There is a lack of teaching aids and institutional support necessary for inclusive education.	“Not adequate manipulatives nga para gyud nila.”
4. Training Gaps and Confidence Issues	No SPED training, reliance on peers, self-doubt	Teachers feel underprepared and often doubt their strategies due to lack of formal SPED training.	“Wajud ko kasuway ug training.”
5. Emotional Toll and Professional Burnout	High stress, role strain, emotional fatigue	Emotional and physical exhaustion is common due to ongoing challenges and lack of support.	“Very high gyud ang stress level.”
6. Adaptive Coping and Moral Commitment	Moral commitment, support-seeking, prayer, peer help	Despite hardships, teachers show resilience and moral duty to support LSENs in their care.	“Gidawat nalang nako nga part sa akong klase ang LSEN.”

### Theme 1: Behavioral Management as a Constant Struggle

Teachers consistently reported that managing the behavior of LSENs was the most taxing aspect of their roles. Respondent 1, Maria Eloisa Abigail S. Perocho, a Grade 1 Teacher III with 10 years of experience (1 year handling learners with special educational needs), emphasized the difficulty of dealing with learners who had "short attention span, no retention sa lessons, dili mamati kung buyagon." The daily unpredictability of students' behaviors often disrupted the flow of instruction and tested teachers' patience and control. These behavioral outbursts, ranging from shouting to physical aggression, deeply affected the classroom environment and required constant attention.

Similarly, Ceniza, a Grade 2 Teacher III with 38 years of experience (3 years with learners with special educational needs), described a specific incident: “Kadtu gyud si Christian nga manghapak jud ug kalit... motindog lang gyud to siya ug moduol ug manghapak.” The physical aggression exhibited by the learner not only disturbed the class but also left her feeling helpless and at risk. Behavioral issues were further complicated by the lack of clear diagnoses and inadequate professional support. These experiences show how teachers carry not just instructional but emotional and safety burdens when handling such complex classroom dynamics.

The persistent struggle with behavioral management among teachers handling learners with special educational needs reflects a well-documented challenge in inclusive education. According to (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2020), behavioral difficulties are among the most significant barriers to successful inclusion, often leading to teacher stress, emotional exhaustion, and decreased classroom effectiveness if not adequately supported. Respondents' experiences of unpredictable and sometimes aggressive behaviors highlight the urgent need for specialized training in positive behavioral interventions and for more systematic professional and psychological support structures within schools. The implication is clear: without equipping teachers with effective behavior management strategies and ensuring access to mental health and special education professionals, inclusive practices risk undermining not only the learning environment but also teachers' well-being and long-term commitment to inclusive education.

### Theme 2: Instructional Burden and Time Constraints

Instructional planning for learners with special educational needs was described as highly demanding and time-consuming. Teachers found themselves preparing differentiated materials and activities to cater to the varied abilities and needs of their learners. Respondent 3, Eugenia Honculada, a Grade 3 Filipino Teacher III

with 24 years of experience (4 years with learners with special educational needs), shared, “Murag ga doble sa trabaho... kinahanglan maghimo para sa regular ug para pud sa learners with special educational needs.” This doubling of effort placed a strain on their already full workloads and often led to feelings of inadequacy in meeting everyone’s needs.

Respondent 5, Ann Dalapo, a Kindergarten Teacher III with 11 years of experience, also noted that the time required for individualized instruction conflicted with classroom realities: “Dili ko makahatag kay kanang unruly na gani sila teacher.” With a full class of regular learners, teachers often struggled to provide the one-on-one support to learners with special educational needs required. This time pressure contributed to guilt and frustration, especially when teachers could not give learners with special educational needs the attention they deserved. These narratives reflect the balancing act teachers are forced to perform, often at the expense of either the learners with special educational needs or the regular class.

The heavy instructional burden and time constraints faced by teachers supporting learners with special educational needs mirror findings in current research, where differentiated instruction for diverse learners is consistently identified as a major challenge in inclusive classrooms. According to (Florian & Spratt, 2020), while inclusive education demands differentiated and personalized teaching strategies, teachers often lack sufficient time, resources, and support to implement these effectively, leading to emotional strain and professional dissatisfaction.

The narratives highlight how teachers are forced into a precarious balancing act between meeting the needs of learners with special educational needs and managing an entire class. This implies that for inclusive education to succeed, systemic changes such as reduced class sizes, provision of teacher aides, and structured time allowances for planning individualized instruction must be prioritized to relieve teachers from unsustainable workloads and ensure equitable attention to all learners.

### Theme 3: Lack of Resources and Structural Support

The lack of specialized materials and professional support emerged as a prominent concern across the interviews. Teachers repeatedly voiced the need for more manipulatives and shadow teachers. Respondent 1, Maria Eloisa Abigail S. Perocho, remarked, “Not adequate manipulatives nga para gyud nila sa learners with special educational needs... unya other materials nga makatabang pag tame sa ilang behavior.” The unavailability of assistive tools limited the scope of intervention teachers could provide, leaving them to improvise or rely on limited resources designed for regular students.

**Respondent 2, Ceniza**, echoed this sentiment by emphasizing the absence of a shadow teacher: “Wa jamo... unta naa jud shadow teacher unja regular students 30 plus pa.” She highlighted how the ratio of students to teachers made it nearly impossible to focus adequately on learners with special educational needs. Furthermore, **Respondent 5, Ann Dalapo**, discussed how SPED services were inconsistent: “Naa koy mga manipulative pero para sa regular... dili jud to para learners with special educational needs.” These experiences underscore the systemic gaps in inclusive education implementation, where teacher dedication must compensate for institutional shortcomings. The shortage of specialized materials, assistive technologies, and professional support structures for learners with special educational needs reflects a systemic weakness in inclusive education implementation. Research by (de Boer et al., 2021) confirms that without sufficient material resources and human support, such as teaching aides or shadow teachers, inclusive practices are severely undermined, leading to teacher burnout and diminished educational outcomes for learners with special needs. Teachers' improvisation with inadequate tools and lack of individualized assistance forces them into unsustainable roles that exceed normal instructional responsibilities. This highlights a critical implication: for inclusive education to be meaningfully realized, systemic investments must prioritize equipping classrooms with appropriate learning materials, assigning specialized support staff, and ensuring that resource allocation directly addresses the unique needs of learners with special educational needs rather than relying solely on teacher adaptability and goodwill.

#### Theme 4: Training Gaps and Confidence Issues

A recurring theme was the lack of formal training and the consequent self-doubt among teachers. **Respondent 1, Maria Eloisa Abigail S. Perocho**, openly admitted, “Not adequately trained gyud... managing and taming learners with special educational needs behavior.” Without specific pedagogical knowledge, teachers relied heavily on trial-and-error, observation, and peer consultation, leading to anxiety about whether their approaches were effective or even appropriate.

Similarly, **Respondent 4, Cielito B. Carreon**, a Grade 3 AP Teacher III with 8 years of teaching experience (1 year handling learners with special educational needs) shared, “Kuwang pa kaayo... akong nahibaw-an kadto rang alphabet nga inamang.” Her narrative reveals the limited knowledge even on basic communication tools like Braille or sign language. The teachers’ feelings of unpreparedness were especially evident in managing behavior, differentiating instruction, and designing IEP-like interventions. Many reported a need for in-service training specific to behavioral management and individualized planning to boost their confidence and effectiveness. The widespread lack of formal training and resulting confidence issues among teachers mirrors findings in inclusive education research, where inadequate preparation is linked to high levels of anxiety and feelings of professional incompetence. (Alnahdi, 2020) found that insufficient pre-service and in-service training for inclusive practices leads teachers to rely on trial-and-error methods, which not only undermines their self-efficacy but also potentially limits the quality of support provided to learners with special educational needs.

Respondents’ experiences highlight that simply attending general seminars is insufficient if teachers are not specifically trained in individualized planning, behavior management, and the use of specialized communication strategies. The implication is clear: to strengthen inclusive education, education systems must implement comprehensive, ongoing, and skills-based training programs that directly target the practical needs of teachers working with learners with special educational needs, thereby enhancing their confidence, competence, and long-term retention in inclusive settings.

#### Theme 5: Emotional Toll and Professional Burnout

Handling learners with special educational needs took a significant emotional toll on the respondents, often resulting in high stress and mental fatigue. **Respondent 1, Maria Eloisa Abigail S. Perocho**, shared, “Very high gyud ang stress level nako adtong panahona,” a sentiment echoed by others. The burden of ensuring every child receives attention, despite systemic constraints, made teaching emotionally draining. Teachers often struggled with guilt, questioning their effectiveness and fairness in addressing the needs of both learners with special educational needs and regular students.

**Respondent 5, Ann Dalapo**, recounted her emotional strain when dealing with a child whose condition was undiagnosed: “Lisod isulti sa parent kay basin mabanghagan ta or ma kasuhan ta.” Fear of parental backlash, coupled with a lack of diagnostic clarity, compounded her stress. Still, teachers like **Respondent 3, Eugenia Honculada**, tried to keep a balanced perspective, though she confessed, “Murag ma stress ko, unsaon nako ugma.” These narratives reveal how prolonged exposure to challenging classroom situations without adequate support may lead to burnout, threatening teacher retention and well-being. The emotional toll and signs of professional burnout experienced by teachers handling learners with special educational needs are consistent with broader findings on the mental health impacts of inclusive education without adequate systemic support.

According to (Carroll et al., 2022), teachers working in under-resourced inclusive settings are at heightened risk for emotional exhaustion, stress, and eventual burnout, particularly when they lack training, administrative support, and access to mental health resources. Respondents’ fears of miscommunication with parents and feelings of inadequacy further exacerbate this stress, highlighting a vicious cycle that can ultimately impact teacher retention and the sustainability of inclusive education. This implies that education systems must prioritize not only technical training but also mental health support programs, counseling access, and workload adjustments to protect teachers’ emotional well-being and ensure a resilient, effective inclusive workforce.



## Theme 6: Adaptive Coping and Moral Commitment

Despite the challenges, all respondents showed deep compassion and moral commitment to their roles. **Respondent 1, Maria Eloisa Abigail S. Perocho**, expressed acceptance and dedication: “Gidawat nalang gyud nako nga part sa akong klase ang learners with special educational needs.” She also acknowledged the emotional support of her colleagues, highlighting how peer-sharing became a lifeline in coping with classroom challenges. Similarly, **Respondent 4, Cielito B. Carreon**, stated, “Moginhawa ug taman... mohilom ra pod ka gamay,” emphasizing the importance of emotional regulation and reflective solitude.

**Respondent 5, Ann Dalapo**, showcased an inventive and empathetic approach by providing a modular learning alternative to a student with mild autism: “Gimodular nalang nako para maka continue siya.” Her action highlights the depth of teacher dedication even without systemic backing. These stories affirm that personal values, teacher identity, and maternal instincts drive resilience and creative problem-solving. Even when support is minimal, these teachers find meaning in their work through the relationships they build with their learners. The strong moral commitment and adaptive coping strategies demonstrated by the teachers align with findings that personal values, intrinsic motivation, and peer support are crucial buffers against burnout in challenging inclusive education settings.

Spear-Swerling (2022), emphasized that teacher resilience is significantly fostered by emotional regulation skills, peer collaboration, and a strong sense of purpose, which sustain teacher engagement even in the absence of systemic resources. The respondents’ reliance on acceptance, emotional regulation, reflective practices, and inventive accommodations shows that moral commitment can drive creative solutions and endurance. However, the implication is that while personal resilience is commendable, it should not replace the need for institutionalized support systems—professional development, mental health resources, and administrative backing must complement teacher dedication to create truly sustainable inclusive education environments.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study illuminates the urgent need to move beyond awareness and goodwill in inclusive education and toward sustained, skill-based professional empowerment for Key Stage 1 teachers. While the respondents exhibited competency in terms of attitude and foundational knowledge, their ability to consistently apply inclusive strategies in real classroom settings remains hindered by gaps in specialized training, behavioral management techniques, and access to adaptive resources.

To ensure that inclusive education becomes not just a policy ideal but a lived reality, it is imperative that capacity-building interventions be implemented within the next academic year. These interventions must be context-specific, practical in nature, and delivered through collaborative structures that engage SPED professionals, school administrators, and parents. Establishing a functional support system and investing in hands-on teacher development within a clearly defined timeframe will be instrumental in building both competence and confidence. In doing so, the vision of equitable learning for all children Including those with special educational needs can begin to take root and flourish in classrooms like those in Dao Elementary School.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the salient findings of the study, the action plan is hereby recommended to enhance competency in handling learners with special educational needs.

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