

Social Integration Challenges of Learners with Learning Needs

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ABSTRACT

This study determined the social integration challenges of learners with learning needs in elementary schools in the Tagalog-speaking towns of Camarines Norte, Philippines. Employing a quantitative descriptive-correlational design, data were gathered through total enumeration sampling from 105 of the 115 receiving teachers comprising the population, using an adapted and expert-validated four-point Likert-scale questionnaire (overall $\alpha = .934$). Weighted mean and Pearson product-moment correlation were used to analyze the data. The level of social integration was high in terms of peer interaction (3.25), observational learning (3.10), and participation in the school environment (2.97). Teacher support and inclusive school climate were strongly evident (both 3.63), as was peer modeling (3.28), while family involvement was moderately evident (3.23). Peer modeling registered the strongest significant relationship with all three dimensions of social integration ($r = .607, .563, \text{ and } .723; p < .01$), while inclusive school climate was not significantly related to observational learning ($r = .135$) or to participation in the school environment ($r = .188$). The null hypothesis was therefore rejected for the ten factor–dimension pairings that reached significance and retained for the two involving inclusive school climate. Moderate challenges were encountered in relation to peer modeling (2.75), teacher support (2.78), family involvement (2.93), and inclusive school climate (2.66). The findings indicate that social integration is driven less by the physical and policy features of the school than by the quality of modeled peer behavior and mediating adult support. On this basis, the SPED-to-Classroom Bridging Conference (SBC) was proposed as a structured turnover and capacity-building session for receiving teachers.

Keywords: social integration, learners with learning needs, inclusive education, peer modeling, receiving teachers

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education rests on the principle that every child, regardless of ability or background, has the right to learn alongside others. Recognizing its importance, the international community has affirmed this commitment through the Salamanca Statement (1994), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), and the Incheon Declaration (2016), which together assert that learners should not merely be admitted into schools but should have genuine opportunities to take part in academic and social life.

Likewise, scholarship has established that inclusion is realized through social participation rather than physical placement alone. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) explain that special educational needs arise from differences in neurological functioning rather than from low intelligence or insufficient effort, and that the attitudes and preparedness of teachers substantially shape how these learners experience school. Koster et al. (2010) further document that learners with learning needs frequently encounter peer rejection and withdraw from social activities, while Wiener and Schneider (2002) found that they report loneliness more often than their peers, with attendant costs to self-esteem and emotional well-being.

In the Philippines, the 1987 Constitution, the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons (Republic Act No. 7277),

and the Inclusive Education Act (Republic Act No. 11650) establish a strong national policy commitment to inclusive schooling.

Despite these policy initiatives, implementation remains uneven. Cuadra (2023) reports that many Philippine schools still lack the resources, trained teachers, and support systems that make inclusion meaningful. McCrimmon (2014) similarly observed that teachers receive insufficient training on the social and emotional dimensions of inclusive teaching, and Halinen and Järvinen (2008) note that even in systems where inclusion is a national priority, learners with learning needs often remain passive attendees rather than active participants.

Furthermore, much of the existing literature has concentrated on academic accommodation, leaving limited evidence on social integration as systematically observed by receiving teachers in Philippine classrooms. This study therefore examined the social integration of learners with learning needs as observed by their receiving teachers, together with the factors that shape it and the challenges that constrain it.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: (1) What is the level of social integration of learners with learning needs in terms of peer interaction, observational learning, and participation in the school environment? (2) What are the factors influencing their social integration along peer modeling, teacher support, family involvement, and inclusive school climate? (3) Is there a significant relationship between the level of social integration and these factors? (4) What challenges do learners with learning needs encounter in achieving social integration in relation to the same four factors? (5) What intervention may be proposed to improve their level of social integration? The study hypothesized that no significant relationship exists between the level of social integration of learners with learning needs and the factors influencing it.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a quantitative research method using a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the social integration of learners with learning needs as observed by their receiving teachers. It was anchored in Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), and Allport's Contact Theory (1954).

The descriptive component focused on determining the level of social integration across peer interaction, observational learning, and participation in the school environment; the levels of peer modeling, teacher support, family involvement, and inclusive school climate; and the challenges encountered in relation to those four factors. The correlational component determined the relationship between the level of social integration and the factors influencing it, with the hypothesis that no significant relationship exists between them. Combining the two approaches allowed the study to document prevailing conditions and test associations among variables, consistent with established practice in educational research (Creswell and Creswell, 2018; Cohen et al., 2018).

The population comprised 115 receiving teachers handling learners with learning needs in elementary schools located in the Tagalog-speaking towns of the province of Camarines Norte, Philippines. Total enumeration sampling was used, so that all qualified teachers in the locale served as respondents (Etikan et al., 2016). Eligibility was limited to licensed teachers currently employed in public schools implementing the Special Needs Education (SNED) program, handling inclusive or SNED classes that included learners with learning needs, and with at least one year of teaching experience with such learners. These criteria rest on the premise that direct and sustained classroom contact yields the most accurate observational account of social integration. Of the 115 eligible teachers, 105 completed the survey, a participation rate of 91.3 percent.

A validated survey questionnaire was the primary research instrument, adapted from indicators used by Lindner et al. (2022), García-Carrión et al. (2023), Huynh and Nguyen (2025), and Marini et al. (2023) and contextualized for the Philippine setting. It had three parts rated on a four-point Likert scale: Part I measured

the level of social integration through 15 indicators, Part II the four influencing factors through 20 indicators, and Part III the challenges encountered through 20 indicators. Content validity was established through expert validation by specialists in special education and educational research, and the instrument was pilot tested on 20 teachers outside the sample.

Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (Taber, 2018), with subscale coefficients ranging from .832 to .951 and an overall coefficient of $\alpha = .934$ for the full 55-item instrument.

The research proposal, including its instrument and procedures for obtaining informed consent, was reviewed and approved by the Thesis Advisory Committee of the Graduate School of Mabini Colleges, Incorporated, which issued a Notice to Proceed on 16 January 2026. Permission to conduct the study was subsequently obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent and the heads of the participating schools before teacher-respondents were invited to participate. Pilot testing was carried out in February 2026 and data gathering proper in March 2026, with the questionnaire administered through a combination of hard copy and Google Forms and written instructions supplied before administration.

Responses were encoded and analyzed using Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS Version 21. Weighted mean was used to determine the level of social integration, the levels of the four influencing factors, and the extent of the challenges encountered, while Pearson product-moment correlation tested the relationship between social integration and the influencing factors (Field, 2018), evaluated at the .05 and .01 levels of significance. Weighted means were interpreted using four equal ranges: 3.26–4.00, 2.51–3.25, 1.76–2.50, and 1.00–1.75, corresponding respectively to Very High, High, Low, and Very Low Level for Part I; Strongly, Moderately, and Slightly Evident and Not Evident for Part II; and Major, Moderate, and Slight Challenge and Not a Challenge for Part III.

Participation was voluntary and respondents could withdraw at any point without explanation. An informed consent statement preceded the survey, and respondents were advised that participation carried no foreseeable risks. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, no names appear in the reporting of results, and respondents retained the right to decline sensitive items, to access the findings, and to seek clarification at any stage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Level of Social Integration Among Learners with Learning Needs

This section presents the level of social integration of learners with learning needs in terms of peer interaction, observational learning, and participation in the school environment. The results describe how learners with learning needs interact with peers, learn through observation, and participate in classroom and school activities based on the perceptions of receiving teachers.

Table 1 Level of Social Integration of Learners with Learning Needs in Terms of Peer Interaction

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Learners with learning needs:		
1. initiate conversations or greetings with classmates.	3.33	Very High Level
2. are included by peers during classroom or group activities.	3.56	Very High Level
3. feel accepted and respected by classmates.	3.10	High Level
4. cooperate with peers during class discussions or group tasks.	3.20	High Level

5. show comfort when interacting with peers during school activities.	3.07	High Level
Overall Weighted Mean	3.25	High Level

Rating Scale Descriptive Interpretation

3.26 – 4.00 Very High Level

2.51 – 3.25 High Level

1.76 – 2.50 Low Level

1.00 – 1.75 Very Low Level

Peer interaction registered an overall weighted mean of 3.25 (High Level). Learners with learning needs were most often included by peers during classroom or group activities (WM = 3.56) and initiated conversations or greetings (WM = 3.33), while the lowest ratings were for comfort during interaction (WM = 3.07) and feeling accepted and respected by classmates (WM = 3.10). Inclusion at the level of classroom structure is therefore largely in place while inclusion at the level of felt belonging lags behind, suggesting that peer interaction is sustained more by teacher-arranged groupings than by spontaneous social comfort. This is consistent with Khusheim (2021), who reported that learners who felt accepted by peers demonstrated stronger classroom engagement.

Table 2 Level of Social Integration of Learners with Learning Needs in Terms of Observational Learning

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Learners with learning needs:		
1. imitate positive behaviors modeled by peers.	3.06	High Level
2. follow classroom rules and routines after observing others.	3.08	High Level
3. apply skills learned through watching peers.	3.20	High Level
4. adjust their behavior based on teacher and peer feedback.	3.07	High Level
5. adopt strategies observed from classmates to complete tasks.	3.10	High Level
Overall Weighted Mean	3.10	High Level

Rating Scale Descriptive Interpretation

3.26 – 4.00 Very High Level

2.51 – 3.25 High Level

1.76 – 2.50 Low Level

1.00 – 1.75 Very Low Level

Observational learning obtained an overall weighted mean of 3.10 (High Level), with a narrow range from 3.06 to 3.20. Learners most readily applied skills learned through watching peers (WM = 3.20), while imitating modelled positive behaviors (WM = 3.06) and adjusting to feedback (WM = 3.07) rated lowest. Observational learning is thus stronger in the task domain than in the social-behavioral domain: learners copy a procedure more readily than they internalize turn-taking or classroom conduct, implying that observation alone is insufficient without explicit labelling and reinforcement by the teacher. García-Carrión

et al. (2023) similarly found that interactive group arrangements raised both attention and social interaction among learners with disabilities.

Table 3 Level of Social Integration of Learners with Learning Needs in Terms of Participation in the School Environment

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Learners with learning needs:		
1. actively participate in class discussions and activities.	3.03	High Level
2. take part in school programs, projects, or events.	2.86	High Level
3. feel that they belong in their classroom or school.	2.84	High Level
4. volunteer for group or leadership roles.	2.91	High Level
5. show enthusiasm in joining extracurricular or social activities.	3.20	High Level
Overall Weighted Mean	2.97	High Level

Rating Scale Descriptive Interpretation

3.26 – 4.00 Very High Level

2.51 – 3.25 High Level

1.76 – 2.50 Low Level

1.00 – 1.75 Very Low Level

Participation in the school environment recorded an overall weighted mean of 2.97 (High Level), the lowest of the three dimensions. Enthusiasm for extracurricular and social activities rated highest (WM = 3.20), while belongingness (WM = 2.84), participation in school programmes (WM = 2.86), and volunteering for leadership roles (WM = 2.91) rated lowest. The profile is willing but not yet fully realised: learners join when invited or assigned but seldom step forward on their own. The low belongingness rating is particularly significant, indicating that access to school activities has been extended faster than the sense of membership that sustains genuine engagement. Chapple (2024) likewise argued that schools must create environments in which learners feel they belong rather than merely attend.

Factors Influencing Social Integration of Learners with Learning Needs

This section presents the factors influencing the social integration of learners with learning needs, including peer modeling, teacher support, family involvement, and inclusive school climate. These factors are analyzed to determine how they contribute to the social experiences and inclusion of learners with learning needs within the school setting.

Table 4 Factors Influencing Social Integration of Learners with Learning Needs Along Peer Modeling

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. Peers act as positive role models for learners with learning needs.	3.19	Moderately Evident
2. Peers include learners with learning needs during collaborative work.	3.31	Strongly Evident

3. Peers show patience and understanding toward learners with learning needs.	3.26	Strongly Evident
4. Peers demonstrate cooperation and empathy in class.	3.35	Strongly Evident
5. Peers provide social and emotional support when learners face difficulties.	3.28	Strongly Evident
Overall Weighted Mean	3.28	Strongly Evident

Rating Scale Descriptive Interpretation

3.26 – 4.00 Strongly Evident

2.51 – 3.25 Moderately Evident

1.76 – 2.50 Slightly Evident

1.00 – 1.75 Not Evident

Peer modeling obtained an overall weighted mean of 3.28 (Strongly Evident). Peers most consistently demonstrated cooperation and empathy (WM = 3.35) and included learners with learning needs in collaborative work (WM = 3.31), while acting as positive role models rated lowest (WM = 3.19) and was the only indicator falling below the Strongly Evident threshold.

Peers therefore readily display general prosocial dispositions but are less often positioned as deliberate models of behaviour, which suggests that modelling occurs incidentally rather than by design. Lindner et al. (2022) identified positive peer relationships, alongside supportive teachers, as key elements promoting social inclusion.

Table 5 Factors Influencing Social Integration of Learners with Learning Needs Along Teacher Support

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. Teachers encourage equal participation for all learners.	3.59	Strongly Evident
2. Teachers provide guidance in forming positive peer relationships.	3.59	Strongly Evident
3. Teachers promote inclusive practices during classroom activities.	3.68	Strongly Evident
4. Teachers give feedback that supports learners' confidence and interaction.	3.67	Strongly Evident
5. Teachers model respect, empathy, and acceptance in their teaching.	3.63	Strongly Evident
Overall Weighted Mean	3.63	Strongly Evident

Rating Scale Descriptive Interpretation

3.26 – 4.00 Strongly Evident

2.51 – 3.25 Moderately Evident

1.76 – 2.50 Slightly Evident

1.00 – 1.75 Not Evident

Teacher support recorded an overall weighted mean of 3.63 (Strongly Evident), the joint highest factor with inclusive school climate. Promoting inclusive practices rated highest (WM = 3.68), followed by supportive feedback (WM = 3.67), while encouraging equal participation and guiding peer relationships rated lowest at 3.59, still Strongly Evident. The uniformly high ratings indicate that inclusive attitudes and practices are firmly established among the teacher-respondents, consistent with Lindner et al. (2022), who found supportive teacher attitudes to be a key enabler of social inclusion.

Table 6 Factors Influencing Social Integration of Learners with Learning Needs Along Family Involvement

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. Parents communicate with teachers about their child's social progress.	3.32	Strongly Evident
2. Families support their child's participation in school and group activities.	3.14	Moderately Evident
3. Parents reinforce social skills learned in school at home.	3.18	Moderately Evident
4. Families attend school programs involving inclusion.	3.20	Moderately Evident
5. Parents are encouraged to help their child build friendships.	3.31	Strongly Evident
Overall Weighted Mean	3.23	Moderately Evident

Rating Scale Descriptive Interpretation

3.26 – 4.00 Strongly Evident

2.51 – 3.25 Moderately Evident

1.76 – 2.50 Slightly Evident

1.00 – 1.75 Not Evident

Family involvement registered an overall weighted mean of 3.23 (Moderately Evident), the lowest of the four factors. Parents most often communicated with teachers about their child's social progress (WM = 3.32) and were encouraged to help their child build friendships (WM = 3.31), while supporting participation in school and group activities rated lowest (WM = 3.14).

Family involvement is therefore stronger in communication than in participation: parents talk with teachers more readily than they take part in school activities or reinforce social skills at home. Lindner et al. (2022) likewise identified family involvement as a key element of social inclusion.

Table 7 Factors Influencing Social Integration of Learners with Learning Needs Along Inclusive School Climate

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. The school promotes respect and inclusion among all learners.	3.59	Strongly Evident
2. The school provides a welcoming environment for diverse learners.	3.64	Strongly Evident
3. School policies support collaboration between teachers, parents, and learners.	3.61	Strongly Evident
4. The physical environment is safe and accessible to everyone.	3.67	Strongly Evident
5. School administrators support programs that build positive peer relationships.	3.66	Strongly Evident
Overall Weighted Mean	3.63	Strongly Evident

Rating Scale Descriptive Interpretation

3.26 – 4.00 Strongly Evident

2.51 – 3.25 Moderately Evident

1.76 – 2.50 Slightly Evident

1.00 – 1.75 Not Evident

Inclusive school climate also obtained an overall weighted mean of 3.63 (Strongly Evident), with ratings falling within a narrow band from 3.59 to 3.67. A safe and accessible physical environment rated highest (WM = 3.67), while promoting respect and inclusion among all learners rated lowest (WM = 3.59). The school climate is thus strong and evenly established at the institutional level, though the marginally lower rating for interpersonal respect suggests that structural provision runs slightly ahead of peer culture. Ainscow (2020) maintained that schools promote inclusion and equity by building institutional conditions that support participation.

Significant Relationship Between the Level of Social Integration and the Factors Influencing It

This section presents the relationship between the level of social integration and the factors influencing the social integration of learners with learning needs. It determines whether significant relationships exist between the level of social integration in terms of peer interaction, observational learning, participation in the school environment, and the factors influencing social integration, such as peer modeling, teacher support, family involvement, and inclusive school climate.

Table 8 presents the results of the correlation analysis, which analyzes the significant relationship between the level of social integration of learners with learning needs and selected influencing factors, including peer modeling, teacher support, family involvement, and inclusive school climate. Overall, the findings reveal that most of the factors exhibit statistically significant relationships with the dimensions of social integration, although the strength of these relationships varies from weak to strong.

Table 8 Test of Relationship Between the Level of Social Integration and the Factors Influencing Social Integration of Learners with Learning Needs

Level of Social Integration	Factors Influencing Social Integration							
	Peer Modeling		Teacher Support		Family Involvement		Inclusive School Climate	
	Pearson r	Sig. (2-tailed)	Pearson r	Sig. (2-tailed)	Pearson r	Sig. (2-tailed)	Pearson r	Sig. (2-tailed)
Peer Interaction	0.607*	0.000	0.231*	0.018	0.370*	0.000	0.207*	0.034
Observational Learning	0.563*	0.000	0.209*	0.032	0.314*	0.001	0.135	0.171
Participation in the School Environment	0.723*	0.000	0.257*	0.008	0.440*	0.000	0.188	0.055

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Peer modeling recorded the strongest and most consistent relationship with social integration across all three dimensions, correlating with peer interaction ($r = 0.607$, $p < 0.01$), observational learning ($r = 0.563$, $p < 0.01$), and participation in the school environment ($r = 0.723$, $p < 0.01$). Family involvement showed moderate significant relationships throughout ($r = 0.370$, 0.314 , and 0.440 ; $p < 0.01$), and teacher support showed weak but significant relationships ($r = 0.231$, 0.209 , and 0.257). Inclusive school climate was significantly related only to peer interaction ($r = 0.207$, $p < 0.05$) and bore no significant relationship to observational learning ($r = 0.135$, $p = 0.171$) or participation ($r = 0.188$, $p = 0.055$). The null hypothesis was therefore rejected for the ten pairings that reached significance and retained for the two involving inclusive school climate. The pattern indicates that interpersonal and immediate social influences exert a stronger effect on social integration than institutional or structural conditions; the lower coefficients for teacher support suggest that adult mediation operates indirectly, by shaping the peer environment rather than by acting on integration directly.

Challenges Encountered by Learners with Learning Needs in Achieving Social Integration

This section presents the challenges encountered by learners with learning needs in achieving social integration in relation to peer modeling, teacher support, family involvement, and inclusive school climate. The results identify the barriers that may limit the ability of learners with learning needs to fully participate and feel included in the school community.

Table 9 Challenges Encountered by Learners with Learning Needs in Achieving Social Integration in Relation to Peer Modeling

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. Peers hesitate to include learners with learning needs in group work.	2.80	Moderate Challenge
2. Learners with learning needs have few positive peer role models.	2.72	Moderate Challenge

3. Peers lack awareness of how to support learners with learning needs.	2.77	Moderate Challenge
4. Peer interactions are limited to classroom activities only.	2.67	Moderate Challenge
5. Learners with learning needs experience exclusion or isolation from peers.	2.81	Moderate Challenge
Overall Weighted Mean	2.75	Moderate Challenge

Rating Scale Descriptive Interpretation

3.26 – 4.00 Major Challenge

2.51 – 3.25 Moderate Challenge

1.76 – 2.50 Slight Challenge

1.00 – 1.75 Not a Challenge

Peer-related challenges obtained an overall weighted mean of 2.75 (Moderate Challenge). Exclusion or isolation from peers rated highest (WM = 2.81), followed by peer hesitation to include learners in group work (WM = 2.80), while limited interaction beyond the classroom rated lowest (WM = 2.67). The principal peer-level barrier is therefore not the volume of contact but its quality and voluntariness. Monteverde et al. (2023) similarly found that Philippine learners under inclusion policies continue to experience social exclusion despite physical placement in mainstream classes.

Table 10 Challenges Encountered by Learners with Learning Needs in Achieving Social Integration in Relation to Teacher Support

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. Teachers have limited time to provide individualized attention.	2.68	Moderate Challenge
2. Some teachers lack training in inclusive teaching strategies.	3.06	Moderate Challenge
3. Teachers find it hard to balance academic and social support.	2.77	Moderate Challenge
4. Limited resources make it difficult to implement inclusive practices.	2.66	Moderate Challenge
5. Teachers struggle to maintain consistent encouragement for all learners.	2.75	Moderate Challenge
Overall Weighted Mean	2.78	Moderate Challenge

Rating Scale Descriptive Interpretation

3.26 – 4.00 Major Challenge

2.51 – 3.25 Moderate Challenge

1.76 – 2.50 Slight Challenge

1.00 – 1.75 Not a Challenge

Teacher-related challenges recorded an overall weighted mean of 2.78 (Moderate Challenge). Lack of training in inclusive teaching strategies rated highest at WM = 3.06, noticeably above every other item in the table and the highest single challenge mean recorded across the four factors, while limited resources rated lowest (WM = 2.66). The primary constraint therefore lies in professional capacity rather than material provision: teachers hold inclusive attitudes but lack the specialised preparation to translate them into social outcomes. Sabanal et al. (2025) reported varying levels of teacher competence in implementing inclusive practices.

Table 11 Challenges Encountered by Learners with Learning Needs in Achieving Social Integration in Relation to Family Involvement

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. Parents have limited time to attend school activities.	3.01	Moderate Challenge
2. Families are unsure how to promote social development at home.	3.00	Moderate Challenge
3. Socioeconomic barriers limit family involvement in school programs.	2.78	Moderate Challenge
4. Communication between teachers and families is inconsistent.	2.97	Moderate Challenge
5. Parents rely mostly on teachers to manage social concerns.	2.87	Moderate Challenge
Overall Weighted Mean	2.93	Moderate Challenge

Rating Scale Descriptive Interpretation

3.26 – 4.00 Major Challenge

2.51 – 3.25 Moderate Challenge

1.76 – 2.50 Slight Challenge

1.00 – 1.75 Not a Challenge

Family-related challenges obtained an overall weighted mean of 2.93 (Moderate Challenge), the highest among the four factors. Limited parental time to attend school activities rated highest (WM = 3.01), followed closely by uncertainty about how to promote social development at home (WM = 3.00) and inconsistent teacher-family communication (WM = 2.97), while socioeconomic barriers rated lowest (WM = 2.78).

The leading family-level barriers are therefore availability and know-how rather than poverty or indifference. Celebre (2025) emphasised that engaged families provide additional support that reinforces social development at school.

Table 12 Challenges Encountered by Learners with Learning Needs in Achieving Social Integration in Relation to Inclusive School Climate

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. The school lacks programs that promote social inclusion.	2.68	Moderate Challenge
2. Facilities and classrooms are not fully accessible to all learners.	2.72	Moderate Challenge
3. The school culture gives more importance to academics than to inclusion.	2.63	Moderate Challenge
4. Negative attitudes toward learners with learning needs still exist.	2.67	Moderate Challenge
5. Limited funding affects inclusive education initiatives.	2.58	Moderate Challenge
Overall Weighted Mean	2.66	Moderate Challenge

Rating Scale Descriptive Interpretation

3.26 – 4.00 Major Challenge

2.51 – 3.25 Moderate Challenge

1.76 – 2.50 Slight Challenge

1.00 – 1.75 Not a Challenge

Climate-related challenges registered an overall weighted mean of 2.66 (Moderate Challenge), the lowest among the four factors, with ratings distributed narrowly from 2.58 to 2.72. Incomplete accessibility of facilities rated highest (WM = 2.72) and limited funding lowest (WM = 2.58). Respondents did not perceive the institutional environment as a principal obstacle, which is consistent with the strongly evident climate ratings reported in Table 7 and with the absence of a significant relationship between climate and two dimensions of social integration. Dunn et al. (2008) concluded that policies alone are insufficient and that attitudes and practices determine whether inclusion is realized.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that learners with learning needs in the elementary schools studied attain a high level of social integration, and that the factors influencing it are evident to a strong degree, reflecting classrooms in which inclusive placement and supportive conditions are broadly established. Specifically, social integration was highest in peer interaction and lowest in participation in the school environment, where the sense of belonging emerged as the weakest single indicator, while among the influencing factors teacher support and inclusive school climate were strongly evident and family involvement was the least evident. Peer modeling registered the strongest significant relationship with all three dimensions of social integration, family involvement was significantly related to all three, and inclusive school climate bore no significant relationship to observational learning or to participation in the school environment, indicating that social integration is driven more by interpersonal influences than by institutional provision. Despite these positive findings, moderate challenges persist across all four factors, with the absence of teacher training in inclusive strategies and the limited availability of families constituting the most pronounced constraints, suggesting that physical and policy inclusion has been achieved faster than social inclusion. To address these concerns,

the SPED-to-Classroom Bridging Conference was proposed as a structured turnover and capacity-building session for receiving teachers, focusing on the handover of learner social profiles, the deliberate cultivation of peer modeling, and the strengthening of home-school collaboration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations focus on strengthening peer modeling, improving home-school collaboration, and addressing the challenges encountered by learners with learning needs in achieving social integration. School heads are encouraged to institutionalize the SPED-to-Classroom Bridging Conference as a regular part of the school calendar, so that the transfer of learners with learning needs from special education to mainstream classes is accompanied by a structured handover of learner social profiles rather than left to informal arrangement. Receiving teachers may treat peer modeling as a technique to be engineered rather than awaited, deliberately structuring cooperative and goal-sharing activities in which classmates demonstrate the behaviors that learners with learning needs are expected to imitate, while sustaining regular consultation with special education teachers on the social progress of individual learners.

Furthermore, the Schools Division Office may prioritize training in inclusive teaching strategies, which emerged as the single most pronounced difficulty within the teacher-support domain, and strengthen home-school collaboration mechanisms, family involvement being the factor teachers reported as least evident and most challenging despite its significant relationship with all three dimensions of social integration. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to test these relationships using learner self-report measures alongside teacher observation, to adopt longitudinal or intervention designs capable of establishing causal direction, and to extend the inquiry to secondary levels, other linguistic communities, and other regions.

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DECLARATIONS

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Data Availability. The datasets generated and analysed during this study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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