



INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS' COMPETENCE, PREPAREDNESS, AND THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARD INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Abstract:

This study investigated the influence of teachers' competence and preparedness on their attitudes toward inclusive education at the identified public elementary schools implementing inclusion in Cebu, Philippines, using a descriptive-correlational design. The respondents of the study were the 311 general education teachers who were identified using simple random sampling and answered the adopted survey questionnaires. The data were analyzed using frequency count, percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, and Pearson's r. The results showed that the teachers were generally competent and had positive attitudes toward inclusive education. Moreover, the teachers are prepared in handling inclusive classes in terms of their psychological abilities and skills, but are moderately prepared in terms of their physical resources. The correlation analysis showed a negligible positive significant relationship between competence and attitudes, and a weak positive significant relationship between preparedness and attitudes. Hence, it is recommended that school administrators address teachers' professional needs by providing adequate knowledge, skills, resources, and support to promote greater confidence and commitment to inclusive education.

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1. Introduction

Education is a dynamic and lifelong process of learning knowledge, skills, beliefs, attitudes, and habits that facilitate intellectual, social, emotional, and moral development (Pamuji *et al.*, 2024). In the Philippines, it has been a mission to provide learners with a quality education regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions and to introduce inclusive education (Raguindin *et al.*, 2021). Inclusive education is a profound ethical and moral commitment to justice, respect, and equality for all students that goes beyond simply bringing students with different needs into regular classrooms (Cureton, 2022).

Embracing the inclusivity of education for educators offers both immense possibilities and challenges (Bindhani & Gopinath, 2024). Although many educators are dedicated to the philosophy of inclusion, their capacity to properly execute it may be hampered by demands and real-world challenges. The difficulties experienced by teachers towards inclusive education were generally at a moderate level across the areas of assessing children, learning environment, and parental involvement. At the implementation level, Department of Education (DepEd) policies provide high-level guidance for inclusion, but teachers must navigate the complex realities of inclusive classrooms.

In 2022, UNICEF estimates that around 1.6 million children in the Philippines have a disability and approximately 360,879 learners with disabilities were enrolled in DepEd's SPED programs (Labrague, 2018). Considering millions of children aged 5–19 with disabilities, only about 7.5% accessed SPED services in 2019–2020. Because of this situation, the Department of Education implemented the Republic Act 11650 or the Inclusive Education Act IRR. DepEd disseminated the Implementing Rules and Regulations of RA 11650, guiding schools to develop capacity-building plans, set up Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (ILRCs), and train teachers alongside division supervisors to implement inclusive practices.

Inclusive education is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of equitable and just education systems worldwide (Srivastava, 2023). It ensures that all learners, regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, or social differences, are given opportunities to learn together within the same educational settings. More movement has been brought to inclusive education within national and global policies, as seen in the case of RA No. 11650, the Inclusive Education Act of the Philippines, which states that no learner is excluded from quality education due to a disability or special learning needs. However, it primarily lies in the hands of teachers, especially those in general education classrooms, to implement inclusive principles and strategies.

Thus, the literature cites numerous international and local studies that demonstrate that teachers play a central role in the success of inclusion initiatives. Teacher competence, in their ability to adapt instruction, manage diverse classrooms, and apply inclusive strategies, is a key variable in enabling inclusive education (Bent *et al.*, 2021; Almalky & Alrabiah, 2024). Teacher preparedness, seen as emotional, psychological, and technical readiness to engage with inclusive practices, is equally significant (Arias-Pastor *et al.*, 2023; Calandri & Graziano, 2025). Additionally, the teacher's attitudes, which encompass their beliefs about and willingness to accept inclusion, significantly influence the success or failure of inclusion endeavors (Dignath *et al.*, 2022; Jacob & Pillay, 2022).

Even with these insights, the situation in many public schools in Cebu, Philippines, remains different. Initial interviews and contextual assessments reveal that general education teachers in the area often express uncertainty, hesitation, and a sense of inadequacy when confronted with the challenge of inclusive classes. Most teachers lack direct experience with inclusive strategies and have not received sufficient training to adapt their teaching to benefit learners with disabilities. This resonates with recent findings by Herman and Baaki (2024), which indicate that teachers often cite low self-efficacy in implementing inclusive instruction when there is a lack of support or training. Implementation of inclusive education is also faced with logistical, infrastructural, and human resource constraints in the Philippines. Schools usually operate with scarce resources; a high student ratio and few special education specialists make it highly challenging for teachers to cater to diverse learner needs. Erasmus and Johnson (2024) demonstrated that well-intentioned inclusive policies would ultimately fail if teachers were not adequately equipped with structured learning support mechanisms.

In Cebu, there are learners with disabilities who are primarily found in mainstream classrooms; however, such teachers seem to have less exposure to the real meaning of what inclusion really is – they find it hard managing classrooms with divergent behaviors, intervention with behavior, differentiated assessments-as well as knowledge of using assistive technology-these all required inclusive teaching skills (Kimhi & Bar Nir, 2025). Lastly, Miralles-Cardona *et al.* (2025) also found that significant self-efficacy in inclusive settings is often a result of inadequate or absent professional training and institutional support in many local schools. Teachers reported that they lack training to meet the diverse needs of learners when asked to come up with unique individualized education plans (IEPs), collaborate with parents, or tailor the curriculum under Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles (Rosenberg *et al.*, 2023; Kudarinova *et al.*, 2023). Teachers often manifest a critical lack of preparedness, which can lead to resistance, stress, or avoidance behaviors toward students, all of which have negative implications for education at the learning end of students with special needs. Attitudes may be positive, but without confidence and competence, they do not translate into inclusive teaching practices.

Dapudong (2014) stressed that teachers' awareness, attitudes, and skills had been found to affect the process and the outcome of inclusion to a great extent. In terms of curriculum modification and adaptations suitable for students with special needs, the author noted that teachers' awareness and attitudes are extremely valuable to the system since they can bridge any gaps between the formally designed education programs and their actual delivery. Among the primary obstacles to inclusive education are a lack of understanding regarding the concept, a hostile attitude toward students with disabilities, and a tendency to oppose change. In the Philippines, many government-funded schools continue to be inadequately prepared, both in urban areas and in more rural or isolated areas. This could be one reason why many public-school teachers in the Philippines have found difficulty in adapting to inclusive education.

In Central Visayas, it was recorded that 3734 learners from kinder to grade 6 are in the mainstream classrooms in School Year 2024-2025, and it covers the entire region, which includes Cebu Province, but ensures that these learners receive appropriate interventions and the quality education they deserve with the help of their teachers. But, unfortunately, these teachers in regular classes are not in the field of Special Education, and it is clearly shown that most schools in the Philippines have found difficulty in implementing inclusive education. Effective special education requires both a general education teacher and a special education teacher trained to do two different things, not merely to work together with a common purpose (Brownell *et al.*, 2005). This means that to provide "*truly effective special education*," the general education teacher and the special education teacher must be properly educated in their respective fields and trained on how to collaborate effectively to create an inclusive learning environment that supports the needs of pupils with special needs in the classroom (Tenerife *et al.*, 2023).

Even while many educators may have an encouraging mindset toward inclusive education, they may lack the necessary practical skills, such as creating Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), modifying their teaching methods, or utilizing assistive technology. This study aims to investigate the relationship between teachers' skills preparedness and their attitudes towards inclusive education. Conducting this helps uncover whether educators are truly equipped—both in knowledge and practice—to meet the needs of diverse learners, especially those with disabilities or special needs. The findings will serve as the basis for each school to further improve and enhance instructional delivery, identify training and resource gaps, inform policy and professional development, enhance student learning outcomes, and promote teacher well-being and sustainability.

2. Purpose of the Study

This research investigated the influence of general education teachers' competence and preparedness on their attitudes toward inclusive education at the identified public

elementary schools in Cebu, Philippines. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following objectives:

- 1) To determine the level of competence of teachers in handling inclusive classes
- 2) To assess the teachers' level of preparedness in handling inclusive classes
- 3) To determine the level of attitudes of teachers toward inclusive education
- 4) To test the relationship between the teachers' competence and their attitudes towards inclusive education
- 5) To test the relationship between the teachers' preparedness and their attitudes towards inclusive education

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Research Design

A descriptive-correlation research design was utilized in the study to describe existing conditions and simultaneously measure the degree of association between two or more variables. A descriptive-correlational design, as defined by Creswell and Creswell (2017), measures the statistical relationship between variables while attempting to maintain the natural state of the research domain without inferring any causal links. The present study examines the relationship between teacher competence, teacher preparedness and teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education. This design aimed to determine if there was a significant relationship between the perceived levels of competence and preparedness of general education teachers and their corresponding attitudes toward inclusive teaching.

3.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted at the six public elementary schools in Cebu, Philippines, that are implementing inclusive education. The schools cater for learners with special educational needs who were assessed to be suitable to be enrolled in inclusive classes. The learners that the schools usually cater to are those diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), intellectual disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and the like. The schools provide basic education to students in the community, focusing on fostering academic excellence, character development, and holistic growth. These schools were selected due to their existing inclusive classrooms where learners with and without special needs are integrated under the supervision of general education teachers.

3.3 Research Respondents

The respondents of the study were the general education teachers from the six public elementary schools who were handling inclusive classes. These teachers were identified through simple random sampling. This technique enabled the selection of participants based on specific inclusion criteria while maintaining a level of randomness to minimize

bias. Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of their age, gender, field of specialization, and teaching experience.

Table 1: Profile of the Respondents

Profile	f	%
Age		
>54	37	11.90
45-54	68	21.86
35-44	119	38.26
25-34	87	27.97
Total	311	100.00
Gender		
Female	277	89.07
Male	34	10.93
Total	311	100.00
Field of Specialization		
Early Childhood Education	5	1.61
Content Education	4	1.29
Mathematics	7	2.25
Elementary Education	284	91.32
Home Economics	9	2.89
Technology and Livelihood	1	0.32
Science	1	0.32
Total	311	100.00
Teaching Experience (in years)		
>15	122	39.23
11-15	51	16.40
6-10	105	33.76
1-5	33	10.61
Total	311	100.00

It can be observed that most of the respondents are aged 35-44 years, who are female and specialized in elementary education. Notably, most of them have been teaching for more than 15 years. The distribution of the respondents' specialization is aligned with the grade level that is assigned to them. Moreover, the respondents have enough teaching experience, which is one of the important aspects in ensuring teaching effectiveness, especially in inclusive classes which is composed of learners with diverse characteristics.

3.4 Data Collection Tools

In this study, the researchers used an adopted questionnaire from Tenerife *et al.* (2022b) to assess the respondents' competence in handling inclusion, which has 15 indicators. To assess the teachers' preparedness in handling inclusion, the researchers adopted the questionnaire from Okoye and Ifi (2020), which has three domains that assess teachers' preparedness in terms of psychological, skills, and physical resources preparedness. On the other hand, the questionnaire adopted from Wilkerson (2012) was used to assess the

teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, with 14 indicators assessing their attitudes. The respondents were asked to rate the level of their agreement on statements assessing their attributes about handling inclusion using the five-point Likert scale, namely: 5-Strongly Agree, 4-Agree, 3-Undecided, 2-Disagree, and 1-Strongly Disagree.

3.5 Data Collection Process

The researchers observed the protocol in conducting this research. A transmittal letter was submitted to the Schools Division Superintendent. Upon approval, the researchers informed the school principal about the intention to conduct the study in the school. Once the date of data collection was agreed upon, the researchers visited the school and conducted an orientation for the concerned teachers. Each participant was briefed on the purpose of the study and was required to sign an informed consent form before participating. The researchers will personally administer the questionnaires during agreed-upon schedules to ensure clarity and maximize response rates. Respondents were given sufficient time to complete the instruments in a non-disruptive manner within the school premises. Once the questionnaires were completely answered, all data were collected, organized, and encoded for statistical analysis. The researchers ensured a secure storage of all completed forms and digital data files. The information gathered—specifically relating to teachers' competence, preparedness, and attitudes toward inclusive education—was handled with utmost confidentiality.

3.6 Data Analysis

All the collected data from respondents were subjected to the appropriate statistical analysis to determine the results of the study. Frequency count was used to tally the number of respondents who fall into each demographic category, such as age, gender, field of specialization, and teaching experience. The percentage was computed to represent the proportion of respondents in each category relative to the total population. Weighted Mean was used to describe the level of teachers' competencies, preparedness, and attitudes toward inclusive education, while standard deviation was used to assess the dispersion or spread of responses from the mean. Pearson's r was used to test for significant relationships between the teachers' competence and preparedness and the attitudes toward inclusive education.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results and findings of the study on the competence, readiness, and attitudes of the respondents towards inclusion. It also presents the test of the relationship among these variables, together with the discussion of these results.

4.1 Level of Competence in Handling Inclusive Classes

The competence of general education instructors to manage inclusive classrooms is a crucial element impacting the success of inclusive education initiatives. Proficiency encompasses a variety of skills, including adapting instructional methods, managing student behavior, utilizing assistive technologies, and collaborating effectively with colleagues and parents.

Table 2 presents the respondents' level of competence in handling inclusive classes. The overall result reveals that teachers are generally competent, with an aggregate mean of 4.03 and a standard deviation of 0.77. This suggests that the respondents possess the necessary skills and confidence to address the needs of learners with special needs within inclusive classrooms. Among the indicators, the highest-rated competencies include motivating learners with special needs to participate in class activities, providing an atmosphere that is friendly to both learners with and without special needs, establishing partnerships with parents to monitor children, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of learners with special needs, coordinating with well-trained teachers, and collaborating on strategies with colleagues. These were all rated highly competent, highlighting teachers' strong interpersonal, collaborative, and supportive practices, which are crucial for creating a successful, inclusive classroom. In contrast, areas where teachers were rated only as competent include handling the behavior of learners with special needs, implementing processes in handling inclusive classes, using assistive technology, and pursuing advanced studies to enrich knowledge. These indicate that while teachers are capable, there is still room for growth in specialized skills, particularly in managing classroom behavior, integrating assistive technology, and pursuing further professional qualifications.

Table 2: Respondents' Level of Competence in Handling Inclusive Classes

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	Modifying my teaching strategies to cater to children with special needs.	4.06	0.75	Competent
2	Handling the behavior of learners with special needs in an inclusive classroom	3.87	0.79	Competent
3	Implementing the process for handling a class catering to learners with special needs.	3.85	0.83	Competent
4	Using assistive technology for learners with special needs	3.89	0.82	Competent
5	Using appropriate assessment tools for learners with special needs	3.96	0.80	Competent
6	Motivating learners with special needs to participate in class activities	4.06	0.79	Competent
7	Catering to the needs of the learners with disability	3.96	0.80	Competent
8	Providing interventions for any learner with special needs	3.96	0.82	Competent
9	Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of learners with special needs	3.99	0.79	Competent

10	Providing an atmosphere that is friendly to both learners with and without special needs	4.14	0.74	Competent
11	Collaborating strategies and techniques in handling learners with special needs with my colleagues	4.12	0.71	Competent
12	Coordinating with well-trained teachers with regard to the strategies I apply inside the classroom to address the needs of the learners	4.20	0.67	Competent
13	Establishing a partnership with parents to monitor the progress of the child	4.23	0.68	Highly Competent
14	Preparing anecdotal records of the learners with special needs	4.11	0.70	Competent
15	Pursuing advanced studies to enrich my knowledge on handling learners with special needs	3.98	0.78	Competent
	Aggregate Mean	4.03		Competent
	Aggregate Standard Deviation		0.77	

Legend: 4.21-5.00-Highly Competent; 3.41-4.20- Competent; 2.61-3.40-Moderately Competent; 1.81-2.60-Less Competent; 1.00-1.80- Not Competent

These findings are consistent with previous research. Hyassat *et al.* (2017) noted that collaboration and parental involvement are key elements of teacher competence in inclusive education, aligning with the areas where respondents rated themselves highly competent. Similarly, Charles and Alshamsi (2025) pointed out that teachers often feel more confident in creating supportive classroom environments but less so in applying specialized strategies such as behavior management and the use of assistive technology. De Boer *et al.* (2011) also stressed that while teachers generally support inclusion, their confidence in applying specific strategies requires further strengthening through continuous training.

Moreover, recent studies highlight the importance of professional development in enhancing teachers' preparedness for inclusion. For example, Osmani and Stanojkovska-Trajkovska (2024) emphasized that structured training significantly improves teachers' competence in managing special needs, while Woodcock *et al.* (2023) reported that advanced academic preparation enhances teachers' efficacy and positive attitudes toward inclusive practices. This underscores the need to complement teachers' existing competence with ongoing professional learning opportunities tailored to the realities of inclusive classrooms.

Overall, the results imply that while teachers are already competent in handling inclusive classes, particularly in collaboration and supportive practices, targeted training in specialized areas such as behavior management, assistive technology, and advanced studies is crucial. Strengthening these areas will ensure that teachers not only maintain a supportive environment but also acquire the technical expertise needed to fully realize the goals of inclusive education.

4.2 Level of Preparedness in Handling Inclusive Classes

Teachers' preparedness for managing inclusive classes encompasses several dimensions that directly influence their capacity to effectively support diverse learners. These

dimensions include psychological readiness, practical instructional skills, and the availability of adequate physical resources. Examining teachers' preparedness across these aspects provides critical insights into their existing strengths and areas requiring further development, thereby informing strategies to enhance the implementation of effective inclusive education. Evaluating instructors' general readiness to manage inclusive classrooms includes looking at several important elements, such as psychological preparedness, proficiency, and physical resource availability. Recognizing the overall readiness level in each of these areas offers a thorough understanding of teachers' capacity to execute inclusive education.

Table 3 presents the summary of teachers' preparedness in handling inclusive classes in terms of psychological, skills, and physical components. As shown in the table, psychological preparedness obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.71 with a standard deviation of 0.82, which is verbally described as Prepared. This indicates that teachers are positively disposed toward inclusive education and show a willingness to accommodate diverse learners.

Table 3: Summary on the Level of Preparedness in Handling Inclusive Classes

Components	WM	SD	Verbal Description
Psychological	3.71	0.82	Prepared
Skills	3.49	0.80	Prepared
Physical	3.03	1.19	Moderately Prepared
Grand Mean	3.41		Prepared
Grand Standard Deviation		0.94	

Legend: 4.21-5.00-Highly Prepared; 3.41-4.20-Prepared; 2.61-3.40-Moderately Prepared; 1.81-2.60-Less Prepared; 1.00-1.80-Not Prepared

The second highest rating is skills preparedness, with a weighted mean of 3.49 and a standard deviation of 0.80, also described as Prepared. This suggests that teachers possess sufficient pedagogical and instructional competencies in addressing the needs of learners with varying abilities. On the other hand, physical preparedness received the lowest rating with a weighted mean of 3.03 and a standard deviation of 1.19, interpreted as Moderately Prepared. This result reflects limitations in classroom space, facilities, and specialized resources needed for the effective implementation of inclusive practices.

Overall, the results yield a grand mean of 3.41 and a grand standard deviation of 0.94, indicating that teachers are generally Prepared to manage inclusive classrooms, though physical preparedness remains an area requiring significant improvement. The findings reveal that teachers exhibit commendable levels of psychological and skills preparedness, underscoring their readiness to embrace inclusive education through positive attitudes and adequate teaching competencies. The high rating in psychological preparedness implies that teachers' acceptance and willingness to handle learners with diverse needs serve as a strong foundation for inclusive practices. This aligns with studies asserting that teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy are critical determinants of successful inclusion (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

Similarly, the preparedness in skills highlights teachers' ability to adapt instructional strategies, utilize varied assessments, and employ teaching aids suitable for learners with disabilities. However, the presence of moderately prepared indicators suggests gaps in curriculum adaptation and classroom differentiation. This finding is consistent with Walton and Rusznyak (2020), who argue that while theoretical knowledge is often addressed in teacher training, practical skills for modifying instruction and managing learner diversity remain underdeveloped.

Conversely, the relatively low rating in physical preparedness reflects systemic barriers such as inadequate facilities, limited classroom space, and insufficient specialized equipment. This supports the argument of Zorde and Lapidot-Lefler (2025) that infrastructure and learning resources are essential prerequisites for fostering meaningful inclusion. Studies in Ghana (Gyamfi & Yeboah, 2022) further emphasize that without sufficient physical resources, the full implementation of inclusive education remains constrained, regardless of teacher willingness and competence.

In summary, while teachers demonstrate psychological readiness and pedagogical competence, the limitations of physical resources and infrastructures present critical challenges. Addressing these gaps requires systemic investment in facilities, assistive technologies, and inclusive classroom design. As noted by Hidayah (2025), holistic preparedness in inclusive education can only be achieved when teacher training, policy alignment, and physical resource provision are integrated into a coherent framework.

4.3 Level of Attitudes of the Respondents Towards Inclusive Education

Teachers' perspectives on inclusive education have a big impact on the effectiveness of its use in educational institutions. Openness is reflected in positive sentiments and readiness to make accommodations for students with different needs. Conversely, unfavorable or neutral viewpoints could act as obstacles to successful inclusion.

Table 4 presents the level of attitudes of the respondents toward inclusive education. The results reveal an aggregate mean of 3.53 with a standard deviation of 0.84, verbally described as Positive. This indicates that the respondents, overall, exhibit favorable attitudes toward inclusive education, though with some areas of neutrality and concern that highlight important considerations for practice.

Table 4: Level of Attitudes of the Respondents Towards Inclusive Education

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	All students with disabilities should be educated in regular classrooms alongside their non-disabled peers to the fullest extent possible.	3.22	1.01	Neutral
2	It is seldom necessary to remove students with disabilities from general education classrooms to meet their learning needs.	3.42	0.85	Positive
3	Most or all separate classrooms exclusively for students with disabilities should be integrated into general education settings.	3.46	0.83	Positive

4	Most general education classrooms can be adapted to accommodate students with a variety of learning needs.	3.59	0.80	Positive
5	Students with disabilities can be effectively educated in inclusive classrooms rather than in separate special education settings.	3.23	0.85	Neutral
6	Inclusive education is a more efficient model because it minimizes unnecessary transitions between settings.	3.45	0.72	Positive
7	Students with disabilities should not be included in general classrooms because they may require too much of the teacher's time.	3.18	1.00	Neutral
8	I have concerns about including students with disabilities in general classrooms due to potential academic challenges.	3.48	0.79	Positive
9	I have concerns about including students with disabilities in general classrooms due to potential difficulties in social interaction.	3.52	0.82	Positive
10	I find that general education teachers often struggle to meet the needs of students with disabilities, even when they are committed.	3.75	0.88	Positive
11	I would welcome the opportunity to co-teach in an inclusive classroom to support students with diverse needs.	3.73	0.77	Positive
12	All students benefit from co-teaching between the general and Special education teachers.	3.73	0.79	Positive
13	The responsibility of educating students with disabilities should be shared between general and special education teachers.	3.78	0.83	Positive
14	I would welcome participating in collaborative consultation (e.g., regular meetings between special and general education teachers) to support inclusive education.	3.86	0.78	Positive
	Aggregate Mean	3.53		Positive
	Aggregate Standard Deviation		0.84	

Legend: 4.21-5.00-Very Positive; 3.41-4.20-Positive; 2.61-3.40-Neutral; 1.81-2.60-Negative; 1.00-1.80-Very Negative

The data revealed that teachers in this study hold generally positive attitudes toward inclusive education, especially regarding collaborative practices and the shared responsibility for teaching students with disabilities. Nonetheless, their neutral responses highlight the need for targeted strategies to address lingering doubts about the effectiveness of full inclusion, particularly in terms of resource adequacy, classroom support, and teacher workload. Professional development, continuous training, and strengthened school-level support structures will therefore be crucial in translating these positive attitudes into sustained inclusive practice.

4.4 Test of the Relationship between the Respondents' Competence and Their Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education

One important aspect affecting the efficacy of inclusion strategies is the correlation between instructors' attitudes toward inclusive education and their level of competence. By looking at this relationship, it is possible to ascertain whether improving teachers' abilities and expertise is associated with more optimistic outlooks, which may help inclusive programs be implemented more effectively.

Table 5 shows the test of significance on the relationship between the respondents' competence and their attitudes toward inclusive education. The results revealed that the computed r-value is 0.249, suggesting that there is a negligible positive correlation between these variables. A p-value of 0.000, which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, suggests that there is sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis, indicating that the teachers' level of competence has a significant relationship with their attitudes toward inclusion.

Table 5: Test of the Relationship between the Respondents' Competence and Their Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education

Variables	r-value	Strength of Correlation	p - value	Decision	Remarks
Competence and Attitudes	0.249***	Negligible Positive	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
***significant at $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed)					

In simple terms, this finding suggests that if teachers feel competent in managing classrooms and delivering instruction, it can be assumed that they have more positive attitudes toward including learners with disabilities.

Interestingly, this result is supported by Tenerife *et al.* (2022b), which found that teachers who perceived themselves as more competent also tended to have more positive attitudes toward inclusion. Their findings suggest that when teachers feel confident in their skills, they are more open to seeing inclusion as beneficial for both learners with and without disabilities. Similarly, Yada *et al.* (2021), through meta-analyses, reported that teachers with stronger self-efficacy are more likely to adopt supportive attitudes and use inclusive strategies effectively. These studies suggest that competence can boost confidence and influence attitudes.

On the other hand, recent literature points out that teacher attitude is shaped by more than just competence. Jurkowski *et al.* (2023) emphasized that training opportunities and co-teaching models contribute to more positive outlooks on inclusion. In the Philippine context, Flores (2024) observed that Filipino teachers often display mixed attitudes, affected by both personal beliefs and systemic barriers such as a lack of resources and administrative support. Likewise, Ramić (2024) stressed that collaboration between teachers and strong school support systems is crucial in fostering positive attitudes and sustaining inclusive practices. Altogether, this study's findings highlight the complexity of inclusive education. While competence alone may not predict attitudes, a combination of skills, confidence, collaboration, and systemic support can shape how teachers respond to the challenges and opportunities of inclusion.

4.5 Test of the Relationship between the Respondents' Preparedness and Their Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education

Teachers' level of preparedness and their attitudes toward inclusive education are vital factors influencing the success of inclusive practices. This study explored the relationship between these constructs to determine if preparedness significantly predicts positive

attitudes toward inclusion. The ensuing data illustrate the findings of this analysis based on the responses of teachers in inclusive education settings.

Table 6: Test of the Relationship between the Respondents' Preparedness and Their Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education

Variables	r-value	Strength of Correlation	p-value	Decision	Remarks
Preparedness and Attitudes	0.321***	Weak Positive	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
***significant at $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed)					

Table 6 presents the test of the relationship between the respondents' preparedness and their attitudes toward inclusive education. The results show an r-value of 0.321 with a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates a weak positive correlation that is nonetheless statistically significant. In other words, teachers who are more prepared to handle inclusive classes also tend to demonstrate more positive attitudes toward inclusive education.

This result highlights the idea that preparedness plays a key role in shaping how teachers view inclusion. When teachers feel psychologically, physically, and professionally ready, they are more open and willing to embrace inclusive practices. As Pasha *et al.* (2021) explain, readiness involves not just skills and knowledge but also confidence, which strengthens teachers' willingness to accommodate learners with diverse needs. Similarly, Alsarawi and Sukonthaman (2024) note that teachers who perceive themselves as adequately prepared are more likely to adopt positive attitudes and display greater persistence in addressing the challenges of inclusion.

The finding also resonates with the results of earlier studies in the Philippine context. Nunez and Rosales (2021) observed that Filipino teachers who receive support, training, and preparation exhibit more optimistic attitudes toward inclusion, despite systemic barriers. Likewise, Perez *et al.* (2024) emphasized that preparedness combined with strong school collaboration fosters confidence, which in turn shapes more favorable dispositions toward learners with disabilities.

Hence, the evidence suggests that building preparedness among teachers is not only about equipping them with strategies but also about cultivating a mindset that values inclusivity. The significant relationship between preparedness and attitudes shown in this study underlines the importance of continuous professional development, peer support, and adequate resources in fostering a teaching force that is both capable and genuinely positive about inclusion.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that preparedness has a significant relationship with teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education, highlighting its critical role in shaping

favorable perceptions and practices. When teachers feel adequately prepared—equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, resources, and support systems—they gain greater confidence in implementing inclusive strategies. This sense of readiness translates into more positive attitudes toward embracing diversity in the classroom. The results underscore the importance of sustained professional development, strong institutional support, and the provision of adequate resources to strengthen teachers' preparedness. By investing in these areas, schools and education systems can foster an environment where inclusion is not only possible but is also actively embraced. Ultimately, enhancing teacher readiness paves the way for a more inclusive, equitable, and supportive learning environment, ensuring that all students, particularly those with diverse needs, are given opportunities to succeed and thrive.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)

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Ruby Rose Zambrano is a dedicated educator who has been serving in the Department of Education, Cebu Province, for almost nine years. Throughout her teaching career, she has remained committed to helping students build confidence in mathematics while fostering a learning environment that is compassionate and inclusive. She earned her Bachelor in Secondary Education major in Mathematics from the University of the Visayas in 2013. Continuing her passion for professional growth, she completed the academic requirements for the Master of Arts in Education major in Mathematics at Cebu Technological University. Her interest in supporting diverse learners led her to pursue specialization in the field of special education, completing her Diploma in Special Education in 2025 and her Master of Arts in Education major in Special Education in the same year. Her journey reflects her belief that every learner deserves opportunities to thrive, regardless of their abilities or challenges. Her dedication, strengthened by both experience and continuous study, showcases her commitment to creating meaningful and empowering learning experiences for all students.

Jemelyn V. Rallos is a passionate educator from Cebu Province with over nine years of experience in the Department of Education, along with a year of teaching in a private elementary school. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Secondary Education, major in Mathematics from the University of the Visayas in 2013 and went on to complete her Master's in Education, major in Mathematics at Cebu Technological University in 2019. Driven by her love for inclusive education, she further pursued a Diploma and Master's in Special Education, both completed in 2025 at Cebu Technological University. She believes that every child can learn and succeed when given the right guidance and support. She is dedicated to creating meaningful, caring, and engaging learning experiences for all her students.

Melotte Marina Z. Kintanar is a passionate educator from Cebu Province with nine years of experience in the Department of Education and a year of teaching high school in a private school. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Secondary Education, major in Home Economics Technology from the University of the Visayas in 2014 and completed her academic requirements for a Master in Vocational Education at Cebu Technological University. Her love for inclusive education inspired her to pursue a Diploma in Special Education in 2024 and a Master of Arts in Education, major in Special Education in 2025, both from Cebu Technological University. She is committed to creating a nurturing and engaging learning environment where every student feels valued, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential.

Jamaica Amor Abella is a devoted educator from Cebu City with over 11 years of experience teaching in the Department of Education and a year of experience as a playgroup teacher. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Cebu Technological University in 2008 and went on to complete her Master of Arts in Education, major in Administration and Supervision in 2017. She has also pursued

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Miguel Lorenzo A. Delima is a committed and passionate educator from Cebu City with four years of experience in the Department of Education and two years as an elementary school teacher in the private sector. He earned his Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from the University of San Carlos in 2017 and completed his Master of Arts in Education, major in Administration and Supervision at Cebu Technological University in 2024. With a strong dedication to inclusive education, Miguel pursued a Diploma in Special Education in 2024 and a Master of Arts in Education, major in Special Education in 2025, both from Cebu Technological University. He is committed to creating learning spaces where every child feels valued, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential.

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