



**TEACHER PREPAREDNESS AND INCLUSION
CHALLENGES: MULTI-SCHOOL EVIDENCE FROM
THE PHILIPPINE BASIC EDUCATION SYSTEM**

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Abstract:

This multi-school investigation examined teacher preparedness and challenges in implementing inclusive education for learners with special educational needs (LESENs)

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within the Philippine basic education system. Employing a descriptive-correlational design, the study surveyed 182 teachers from public schools under DepEd Cebu Province Division, DepEd Talisay City Division, and a private sectarian university using a purposive sampling technique. Teacher preparedness was assessed across psychological, skills-based, and physical resource dimensions, while implementation challenges were systematically documented. Findings revealed adequate psychological preparedness among educators, yet moderate proficiency in pedagogical skills and inadequate physical infrastructure constrained effective inclusion. Challenge analysis identified specialized educator shortages and inadequate facilities as the most acute barriers, substantially outweighing relational or stakeholder difficulties. Correlation analysis demonstrated statistically significant yet weak positive relationships between all preparedness dimensions and reported challenges, suggesting that increased teacher capacity paradoxically heightens awareness of systemic inadequacies rather than eliminating them. Therefore, the convergence of these findings points out that inclusive education implementation difficulties stem primarily from structural capacity deficits rather than individual teacher unpreparedness. Sustainable inclusion quality necessitates comprehensive systemic transformation integrating professional development, resource allocation, and infrastructure enhancement—coordinated interventions addressing institutional ecology rather than isolated teacher-focused solutions.

Keywords: teacher preparedness, educational challenges, inclusive education, Philippines basic education

1. Background

The global movement toward inclusive education has transformed classroom dynamics, shifting focus from segregation to full integration of diverse learners within general education settings. International frameworks, such as the Salamanca Statement and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, mandate that educational systems accommodate all students regardless of physical or cognitive challenges. In the Philippines, this global mandate is localized through the Inclusive Education Policy Framework and the Enhanced Basic Education Act. Despite robust legislative efforts, the transition from policy to practice remains complex. Philippine schools navigate the challenging terrain of balancing traditional pedagogical structures with heterogeneous needs of modern inclusive classrooms.

Across international contexts, successful inclusion implementation is frequently hindered by significant gaps in teacher preparedness. Research indicates that educators globally struggle with negative psychological attitudes, insufficient specialized pedagogical skills, and chronic lack of adaptive school facilities. These concerns are acutely mirrored within the Philippine basic education system, where many teachers

report feeling overwhelmed by demands of managing learners with special educational needs (LSEs). Prevailing issues stem from lack of confidence in behavioral management and deficit in individualized instruction mastery. Furthermore, scarcity of physical resources, such as assistive technologies and disability-friendly infrastructure, exacerbates professional anxieties, creating difficult environments for both teachers and students. Most of these prevailing scenarios were personally observed or even experienced among the researchers of the current study in their respective work stations in such locales.

Despite numerous studies exploring teacher attitudes and skills, a significant research gap persists regarding the comprehensive, multi-dimensional assessment of teacher preparedness within the Philippine inclusive education context. Existing studies remain fragmented, examining isolated variables rather than the intersectional relationship between psychological readiness, pedagogical competence, and material resource availability. There is insufficient empirical evidence systematically evaluating how these three dimensions simultaneously influence overall teacher preparedness in managing LSEs particularly within a developing country like the Philippines. This oversight leaves policymakers and administrators without baseline data needed to design evidence-based interventions. Therefore, a comprehensive evaluation across these critical domains is essential to empirically establish the actual state of teacher preparedness and inform targeted institutional support systems and professional development programs.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Psychological Preparedness of Teachers

Empirical investigations show classroom teachers scored on the lower end of the spectrum, and subject teachers markedly further down toward the negative side of the scale's neutral midpoint, while special-education teachers landed on the positive side. A small minority strongly opposed inclusion versus an even smaller fraction strongly advocating it. Attitudes weakly associated with non-category variables, including work orientation and self-efficacy, indicating policy change potential (Saloviita, 2020). More specifically, teachers believing inclusive education effectively serves all students reported higher self-efficacy than skeptical counterparts, with demographic differences raising questions regarding additional qualifications and evolving social attitudes influencing teacher beliefs (Woodcock *et al.*, 2023).

School environment factors, namely collective efficacy and school climate, plus mastery experiences significantly predicted teachers' self-efficacy. Self-efficacy mediated the relationship between school climate perceptions and reported inclusive behavior, illuminating how teacher self-efficacy develops. Engaging teacher belief systems may foster school climates promoting inclusion (Wilson *et al.*, 2020). Professional learning

supporting inclusive teaching strategy implementation may strengthen capability beliefs and inclusion confidence (Woodcock *et al.*, 2023).

Comparatively, preservice teachers' cognitive and emotional appraisals plus inclusion efficacy averaged within the moderate range, signaling growth potential. Through intervention, all participants' attitudes toward inclusive education shifted significantly, with combining information-based instruction with structured fieldwork experiences demonstrating strong potential for transforming preservice teachers' inclusive education attitudes (Hassanein *et al.*, 2021). Most importantly, only attitude and self-efficacy combined to significantly predict teachers' intentions toward practicing inclusive education, while subjective norms showed no relationship (Opoku *et al.*, 2021). Locally, practice teachers held positive inclusion views regardless of sex or degree program, though they sought deeper training and hands-on classroom involvement, viewing government, school, parent, and guardian support as essential (Agati & Caballes, 2023).

2.2 Skills Preparedness of Teachers

General education teachers possessed only partial knowledge regarding educating children with disabilities and held general ideas about inclusive education. Most lacked sufficient grounding in special pedagogy and correctional psychology, particularly defining special psychology categories and disorder etiology, necessitating improved professional competence through targeted teacher work (Karynbaeva *et al.*, 2022).

Special educators noted that successfully including children with special educational needs in mainstream education depends largely on teachers developing inclusively oriented professional and personal competencies, requiring modernized approaches, content, and directions of special teacher training programs (Bibigul *et al.*, 2020).

Teacher education and professional development programs benefit from offering continuous learning across three domains: making informed assessment-based decisions, cultivating understanding and compassion for students with special needs, and fostering effective communication within and beyond classrooms with all stakeholders involved (Byrd & Alexander, 2020). Teachers were somewhat ready in classroom instruction and assessing LSEN progress, and fairly efficient in inclusive instruction, parental collaboration, and managing disruptive behavior. Mental health ranked highest among LSEN domains observed, social second, and physical at the bottom, with inclusive practices averaging very high frequency (Ga-ano, 2025).

However, pedagogical universities lacked coherent pre-service teacher inclusion preparation strategies, including inclusive program, course, and curriculum development (Makoelle & Burmistrova, 2025). Most regular teachers were unprepared for inclusion, with limited knowledge of supportive learning strategies and reported lack of specialized training, resulting in low confidence managing diverse learners (Logroño

& Gongora, 2023). Receiving teachers struggled with curriculum modification, fair assessment implementation, and managing LSEN behaviors, contributing to stress and inadequacy. Despite resilience through self-directed learning and peer collaboration, inequitable resources and absent structured professional development hindered practice, with targeted training, mentoring, and institutional support urgently needed (Giger *et al.*, 2025).

2.3 Physical Resources Preparedness of Teachers

Educational facilities and infrastructure, both soft and hard equipment, are essential, since children with special needs share equal rights to proper education. Schools must ensure adequate physical resources support learning, while continuous teacher training equips educators to address diverse developmental conditions for optimal student development (Simorangkir, 2021). Specifically, each category of children with special needs requires distinct physical resources, though certain facilities (rooms, equipment, media, and learning materials) can be adapted across multiple disability types. Inclusive early childhood institutions must therefore provide modified infrastructure tailored to varied characteristics for effective inclusive use (Azzahra *et al.*, 2022).

Schools provide accessible classrooms, disability-friendly toilets, ramps, and Disability Service Units, yet special learning aids remain limited. Budget and human resource constraints persist despite annual planning and routine monitoring. Strategies include requesting Education Office assistance, partnering with community organizations, and conducting inclusive teacher training (Santi *et al.*, 2025). However, lower basic education teachers demonstrated psychological and skills preparedness but were uncertain regarding physical resources preparedness. The study recommended government-attached psychologists and medical personnel at primary schools to assist teachers in early identification of students with special educational needs (Okoye & Ifi, 2020).

Inhibiting factors in inclusive education implementation include the shortage of special assistant teachers and limited supporting infrastructure. Realizing inclusive education as envisioned requires a shared commitment among parents, teachers, and students, alongside adequate facilities and learning materials to sustain meaningful classroom participation (Blora, 2020). Most comprehensively, findings indicated that dozens of barriers and numerous facilitators influencing intervention sustainment were largely consistent across school and childcare settings. Stakeholders identified inner contextual factors, particularly availability of facilities and equipment, sustained leadership support, and team cohesion or teamwork, as critical determinants of long-term sustainment (Shoesmith *et al.*, 2021).

Ultimately, this review accentuates that effective inclusive education relies on a holistic synergy between three pillars: teachers' psychological readiness, their pedagogical skill acquisition, and the provision of adequate physical resources. While

cultivating positive attitudes and self-efficacy remains foundational, these internal shifts must be bolstered by targeted training and tangible infrastructure. Only through the strategic integration of these psychological, professional, and material domains can educational systems truly foster equitable, sustainable inclusion for all learners.

3. Methodology

3.1 Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to examine teachers' preparedness in handling learners with special educational needs (LSENs) in inclusive settings and the challenges they encounter. It explored multiple dimensions of teacher readiness—psychological, skills-based, and physical resources—through structured questionnaires. The study investigated the relationship between preparedness levels and challenges faced. This design was appropriate as it allows systematic description of population characteristics and examination of variable relationships without manipulating conditions (Morales, 2021), aligning with objectives to describe teachers' perceived readiness, identify implementation challenges, and determine how these relate to their profiles.

3.2 Environment and Respondents

This study employed purposive sampling to select basic education teachers handling learners with special educational needs (LSENs). This non-probability approach prioritizes depth and contextual relevance by intentionally selecting participants aligned with research objectives, enabling nuanced insights into complex phenomena (Tajik *et al.*, 2025). The sample comprised 90 teachers from DepEd Cebu Province Division, 60 from DepEd Talisay City Division, and 32 from senior high school of a private sectarian university. Public school participants were selected based on experience with LSENs documented in the Learner Information System or family mapping surveys. Specifically, the selection criterion considered for this private university is that the respondents taught LSENs enrolled during 2024–2025.

3.3 Research Instrument

This study utilized an adapted and modified survey questionnaire, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.60 to 0.90 across the three identified domains of teacher preparedness. Such instrument has been structured into three parts to gather data on teachers' preparedness and challenges in inclusive education. Part I comprises eight items on demographic characteristics, including age, gender, field of specialization, current position, highest educational attainment, type of institution, and participation in relevant training. Respondents indicated their profiles by marking the corresponding circle. Part II assesses teachers' preparedness for inclusive education across three domains:

psychological preparedness (6 items), skills preparedness (7 items), and physical resources preparedness (5 items). Part III contains ten statements describing challenges encountered in implementing inclusive education.

Part II employs a Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree to measure teachers' readiness in handling learners with special educational needs. Psychological preparedness examines teachers' attitudes and mental readiness to accommodate and support these learners. Skills preparedness evaluates their capacity to identify disabilities, employ appropriate instructional strategies, and utilize relevant tools and materials. Physical resources preparedness assesses the availability and adequacy of instructional materials, classroom accommodations, and institutional support necessary for inclusive practices.

Accordingly, Part III elicits information on barriers encountered in implementing inclusive education through a Likert scale, where respondents indicate their level of agreement with statements reflecting common challenges. The instrument specifically captures issues related to resources, professional development, communication, and institutional support, including the lack of special education teachers, insufficient classes or materials, limited teacher development programs, weak administrative support, and inadequate collaboration between schools and parents.

3.4 Data Gathering Procedures

3.4.1 Pre-Data Gathering Stage

The study employed purposive sampling to identify participants who were actively engaged in teaching students with special educational needs. The selection process considered specifically a teacher-respondent's history of engagement with inclusive education training initiatives. This selection parameter guided the development and calibration of the data collection instrument, ensuring it would elicit substantive and contextually relevant information regarding educators' readiness and the obstacles they face in inclusive settings. The questionnaire design prioritized precision in measurement while maintaining strict adherence to ethical research protocols.

3.4.2 Data Gathering Stage

Before commencing data collection, the researchers obtained official permission by submitting formal request letters to the relevant institutional authorities: the district supervisor overseeing public school operations and the head administrator of the private sectarian institution. Once authorization was granted, survey instruments were distributed to the selected participants. Each returned questionnaire underwent individual examination to verify that all items had been answered completely and consistently. The collected information was then systematically entered using a tally framework developed by the research team's statistical consultant, after which data verification procedures were implemented to ensure precision and standardization.

Computer-based analytical tools, including Microsoft Excel and specialized statistical software, were employed to organize and interpret the collected information.

3.4.3 Post-Data Gathering Stage

After the completion of data collection, all responses were subjected to rigorous verification and categorization processes to confirm their validity. The research team conducted analytical examinations to identify trends and correlations in the dataset, with particular attention to educators' readiness levels and the difficulties linked to inclusive education implementation. Findings revealed inconsistent preparedness across psychological, pedagogical, and material resource domains, together with notable deficiencies in both theoretical understanding and practical application of inclusive teaching principles. While the connection between preparedness levels and encountered difficulties proved to be relatively weak, the study's outcomes highlight critical improvement priorities: expanded professional development opportunities for teachers, more strategic distribution of educational resources, and reinforced organizational support mechanisms to strengthen educators' capacity within inclusive educational environments.

3.5 Data Treatment and Analysis

Weighted mean and standard deviation were employed to assess teachers' preparedness in inclusive education. Specifically, the weighted mean for each indicator under the domains of Psychological Preparedness, Skills Preparedness, and Physical Resources Preparedness was computed to determine the overall level of preparedness among respondents. The standard deviation was likewise calculated to examine the degree of variability in responses. For purposes of interpretation, the resulting weighted means were classified according to a predefined descriptive scale. Similarly, in analyzing the challenges encountered by teachers, both the weighted mean and standard deviation were utilized. The weighted mean for each challenge indicator was determined to assess the extent to which teachers experience difficulties in implementing inclusive education, while the standard deviation provided insight into the consistency of responses. The results were then interpreted using an established descriptive scale for challenges.

To examine the relationship between teachers' preparedness and the extent of challenges they encounter in handling learners within an inclusive setting, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was applied. This statistical measure evaluates how observations on two variables are distributed relative to their respective means and determines the degree to which the variables vary together, either in the same or in opposite directions. In this study, Pearson's r was used to analyze the association between teachers' preparedness and the challenges they face in working with learners with special educational needs (LSEs). As a standardized index, Pearson's r ranges from -1 ,

indicating a perfect negative relationship, to +1, indicating a perfect positive relationship (Weisburd *et al.*, 2021).

3.6 Ethical Considerations and Anonymity

To uphold the confidentiality of the data collected, formal permission was secured from the school principal prior to the conduct of the study. All respondents were assured that the information they provided would be treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes. The researcher took appropriate measures to protect and respect the privacy of the participants throughout the research process.

Informed consent was obtained through a consent form, which clearly outlined the nature, purpose, scope, and procedures of the study. This ensured that respondents were adequately informed before agreeing to participate. Participants were also assured that all data would be anonymized and accessible only to authorized individuals. The study adhered to ethical research standards by ensuring that no data fabrication or falsification occurred, thereby supporting the integrity and credibility of the findings.

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Respondents were informed of their right to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any point without any form of penalty or adverse consequence. No harm was associated with refusal or withdrawal. Throughout all stages of the research, ethical principles were strictly observed to maintain the trust, safety, and confidence of all participants.

4. Results and Discussion

As can be gleaned, this section presents a comprehensive examination of teacher preparedness and challenges in implementing inclusive education for learners with special educational needs. The analysis synthesizes quantitative findings across psychological, skills-based, and physical resource dimensions, while exploring the relationship between preparedness levels and implementation difficulties. The subsequent discussion integrates these findings to illuminate systemic patterns, pedagogical implications, and structural barriers affecting inclusive education quality.

Table 1: Psychological Preparedness among Teachers in Handling LSEs (n=182)

S/N	Indicators	✱	SD	Description
1	I accept all kinds of students in my class.	4.54	0.71	Highly prepared
2	I believe that all children can learn in a regular classroom.	3.73	1.15	Prepared
3	I am psychologically stable to handle all kinds of learners.	4.09	0.85	Prepared
4	I don't mind having disabled children in my class.	4.02	1.06	Prepared
5	I am passionate about my job.	4.64	0.55	Highly prepared
6	I don't like teaching students with diverse needs.	2.13	1.11	Less prepared
	Overall	3.86	1.25	Prepared

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 psychological dimension reveals predominantly favorable readiness levels among educators, with the composite measure falling within the prepared category. Acceptance and professional dedication emerged as the strongest elements, both achieving highly prepared status, while affective orientation toward teaching diverse student populations demonstrated notable variability. This pattern aligns with findings where teachers demonstrated solid confidence working in inclusive settings, though concerns surfaced regarding specific abilities, particularly family involvement, disability law awareness, and managing physically aggressive students (Alnahdi, 2020). Negatively framed items revealed areas requiring attention, particularly regarding enthusiasm for differentiated instruction, which registered at the less prepared threshold. Personal stability in managing heterogeneous learner groups and willingness to accommodate students with disabilities both achieved adequate preparedness, though considerable response dispersion suggested experience-based differences, as the lowest confidence appeared among those with limited experience teaching severe disabilities (Aldabas, 2020).

Correspondingly, these findings suggest that while teachers possess foundational positive dispositions toward inclusive education, psychological readiness remains unevenly developed across attitudinal dimensions. The strength in professional commitment and student acceptance indicates a values-aligned foundation, yet the weakness in embracing instructional diversity points to potential cognitive dissonance between abstract acceptance and concrete pedagogical challenges. Special education training substantially improved cognitive appraisal, emotional appraisal, and self-efficacy, particularly when paired with practical classroom experience (Dignath *et al.*, 2022). This pattern implies that affective preparedness alone may be insufficient without corresponding skill development. Moreover, inclusion-related training significantly predicted positive attitudes across cognitive, behavioral, and affective domains, underscoring continuous professional development's importance for cultivating positive inclusion attitudes (Scanlon *et al.*, 2022).

Furthermore, the variability in psychological preparedness indicators reflects the complexity of inclusive education implementation, where personal beliefs, professional identity, and practical realities intersect. Teachers appear more comfortable with philosophical acceptance than with operational implications of differentiated instruction, suggesting that psychological readiness initiatives should address both dispositional and practical concerns. The moderate standard deviations across most items indicate opportunities for targeted professional development that acknowledges individual differences in readiness trajectories while building collective capacity toward more consistent, inclusive practices.

Table 2: Skills Preparedness among Teachers in Handling LSENs (n=182)

S/N	Indicators	\bar{x}	SD	Description
1	I can identify students with disability in my class.	3.92	0.92	Prepared
2	I possess the necessary skills for teaching in an inclusive classroom.	3.49	1.00	Prepared
3	I have no skill in modifying the class activities to suit all learners.	2.38	1.02	Moderately prepared
4	I can structure the lesson to meet the need of all learners.	3.86	0.80	Prepared
5	I can use varieties of assessment tools to suit all learners.	3.87	0.89	Prepared
6	I lack the ability to handle the diverse needs of the learners.	2.56	1.08	Less prepared
7	I can manipulate a variety of instructional aides to suit various kinds of learners.	3.72	0.87	Prepared
	Overall	3.40	1.12	Moderately prepared

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.

Skills-based readiness demonstrates a moderate composite level, representing the lowest preparedness dimension across all domains examined. While individual competencies in learner identification, lesson structuring, assessment differentiation, and instructional materials manipulation achieved adequate prepared status, negatively worded items regarding activity modification abilities and capacity to address diverse needs registered at moderate and less prepared levels respectively, revealing substantial skill deficits. This finding mirrors Philippine contexts where teachers exhibited generally positive attitudes and average skills toward inclusive education but showed knowledge gaps in assistive technology and individualized education planning (Ga-ano, 2025). Similarly, teachers were moderately prepared regarding education, professional development, and instructional strategies, though they were fairly familiar with inclusion principles and averagely efficacious in classroom management (Sito, 2020).

Moreover, the moderate skills preparedness finding reveals a critical gap between psychological willingness and operational capacity, highlighting the insufficiency of positive attitudes without corresponding technical proficiency. Teachers appear capable of recognizing diverse learning needs but struggle with translating that awareness into differentiated pedagogical responses. In Indonesia, inclusive education curriculum planning began with syllabi, lesson plans, and Individual Learning Programs adapted to each student's barriers, with implementation considering children's developmental aspects and program suitability (Sholawati, 2019). This competency-implementation gap suggests that current professional preparation and in-service training inadequately address practical complexities of inclusive instruction, leaving educators without essential tools despite favorable dispositions.

Consequently, the skills deficit carries significant implications for inclusive education quality and student outcomes, as psychological readiness without technical capability may result in well-intentioned but ineffective practices. The pattern indicates that teachers need sustained, practice-based professional development focusing specifically on curriculum modification, differentiated assessment, and adaptive instruction techniques. The lower skills preparedness compared to psychological readiness suggests that capacity-building interventions should prioritize hands-on pedagogical competencies rather than exclusively attitudinal change efforts, addressing the practical demands of inclusive classroom implementation.

Table 3: Physical Resources Preparedness among Teachers in Handling LSEs (n=182)

S/N	Indicators	\bar{x}	SD	Description
1	I do not have the needed materials to teach all kinds of learners.	3.20	1.21	Moderately prepared
2	The classroom is too small to accommodate all learners.	3.23	1.30	Moderately prepared
3	Special facilities needed for students with special needs are available.	3.06	1.31	Moderately prepared
4	The classroom layout facilitates inclusiveness.	2.97	1.13	Moderately prepared
5	I have support staff assigned to help me in my class.	2.34	1.27	Less prepared
	Overall	2.96	1.28	Moderately prepared

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.

Infrastructure and material readiness consistently fell within the moderate preparedness range across all measured indicators, representing the most uniformly deficient preparedness dimension. Classroom spatial adequacy, specialized facilities availability, and instructional materials sufficiency all clustered near the moderate threshold, revealing systemic resource limitations. This finding parallels conditions in Belgut Sub-County preschools, where the majority of institutions lacked essential learning materials such as large-print books, braille machines, and hearing aids, significantly hindering proper inclusive education implementation (Kabwos, 2020). Similarly, Batu City inclusive schools possess relatively complete facilities, yet shortcomings remain: insufficient resource rooms, limited accessibility, inadequate learning media, and scarce library books (Amelia *et al.*, 2022). The availability of support personnel registered at the less prepared level, indicating particularly acute staffing deficits compounding infrastructure challenges.

Furthermore, physical resource inadequacy emerges as a fundamental barrier constraining even well-prepared teachers' ability to implement inclusive practices effectively. The moderate preparedness findings across all infrastructure dimensions

indicate that psychological and skills readiness cannot compensate for material and spatial deficiencies, creating a systemic ceiling effect on inclusion quality. Professional development improvements for in-service general educators require broader training programs offering intervention practice and instructor feedback, while schools must provide resources, including technology, fulfilling least-restrictive-environment legal requirements (Al Jaffal, 2022). The absence of adequate support staff particularly limits teachers' capacity to provide individualized attention, suggesting that inclusive education policy mandates have outpaced corresponding resource investments.

Nonetheless, these infrastructure deficits reflect broader educational resource allocation priorities and budgetary constraints that undermine inclusive education implementation despite policy commitments. The uniform moderate preparedness across physical indicators suggests that improvements require comprehensive systemic interventions rather than targeted fixes to individual resource categories. The resource gap implies that scaling inclusive education quality depends critically on sustained infrastructure investment, facility redesign, material provision, and personnel deployment—areas requiring administrative and policy-level action beyond individual teacher control.

Table 4: Extent of Challenges encountered by Teachers in Handling LSEs (n=182)

S/N	Indicators	\bar{x}	SD	Description
1	Lack of special education teachers	4.34	0.90	Extremely challenged
2	Lack of facilities for special care	4.23	0.97	Extremely challenged
3	Lack of special education classes	4.19	1.02	Challenged
4	Lack of appropriate resources	4.12	1.02	Challenged
5	Inappropriate allocation of learning materials	3.85	1.03	Challenged
6	Lack of understanding of inclusive education	3.51	1.17	Challenged
7	Inadequate program for teacher's development	3.73	1.07	Challenged
8	Absence of working relationship between parents and school	3.11	1.10	Moderately challenged
9	Lack of communication with parents	2.79	1.17	Moderately challenged
10	Unsupportive school board/school governing council	2.68	1.06	Moderately challenged
	Overall	3.65	1.20	Challenged

Legend: 4.21-5.00 Extremely challenged; 3.41-4.20 Challenged; 2.61-3.40 Moderately challenged; 1.81-2.60 Slightly challenged; 1.00-1.80 Not challenged.

The overall challenge intensity registered at the challenged level, with personnel and infrastructure deficits emerging as the most acute difficulties. Specialized educator unavailability and dedicated facility shortages both reached extremely challenged status, representing the most pressing obstacles. Dedicated program availability, appropriate

resource access, and learning material allocation difficulties all achieved challenged ratings, forming a cluster of resource-related barriers. These findings align with contexts where insufficient teaching materials emerged as the most challenging factor in supporting LSEs (Pawid-Pachong, 2025), and where mainstream teachers handling LSEs faced high challenges in training, materials, learner behavior, and school facilities (Alvarez *et al.*, 2025). Professional development inadequacy and limited inclusive education understanding similarly reached challenged intensity, though stakeholder relationship challenges demonstrated notably lower intensity.

Yet, the challenge profile reveals that inclusive education implementation difficulties stem primarily from systemic capacity constraints rather than stakeholder resistance or communication breakdowns. The extreme intensity of specialized personnel and facility shortages indicates that current educational infrastructure fundamentally misaligns with inclusive education requirements, creating implementation barriers individual teachers cannot overcome through improved practices alone. Teachers shared a common understanding of inclusion but lacked adequate skills and knowledge regarding suitable teaching methods for children with special needs, with investments and partner collaboration recommended for overcoming obstacles (Zabeli & Gjelaj, 2020). Challenges included limited training, behavioral management difficulties, scarce resources, competing demands, and inconsistent institutional support (Mamites *et al.*, 2025).

Verily, the dominance of resource challenges indicates that stakeholder engagement alone cannot substitute for fundamental capacity investments—specialized training, dedicated facilities, appropriate materials, and adequate staffing remain prerequisite conditions for effective inclusive practice regardless of relational dynamics. Teachers employed adaptive, collaborative, emotion-focused, and problem-solving coping strategies, alongside individualized education plans and colleague support, with behavior and facility challenges correlating with coping strategies (Alvarez *et al.*, 2025). Teachers' perceived preparedness in collaboration, instructional methods, inclusion implementation, behavioral interventions, curriculum access, and transition planning was moderate, with several aspects rated uncertain, underscoring the need for comprehensive systemic interventions.

Table 5: Test of Relationship Between the Preparedness and Challenges Encountered by the Respondents in Handling LSEs in Inclusive Settings (n=182)

Variables	r-value	Strength of correlation	p-value	Decision	Remarks
Psychological preparedness and challenges encountered	0.2020	weak	0.0063	Reject Ho	Relationship is significant
Skills preparedness & challenges encountered	0.3394	weak	0.0000	Reject Ho	Relationship is significant

Physical resources preparedness & challenges encountered	0.2816	weak	0.0001	Reject Ho	Relationship is significant
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*significant at $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed); df is 180.

All three preparedness dimensions demonstrated statistically significant associations with challenge intensity, though correlation magnitudes remained uniformly weak. Skills-based readiness exhibited the strongest relationship with difficulties encountered, while psychological preparedness showed the weakest association among the three domains. Physical resource availability demonstrated an intermediate correlation strength. Notably, the positive directionality of all correlations indicates that higher preparedness levels paradoxically associate with greater reported challenge intensity across all dimensions. This pattern aligns with findings where a weak linear relationship existed between teachers' attitudes toward mild learning disability education and inclusive classroom practices, with positive attitudes predicting inclusive settings but weak association suggesting unpreparedness for accommodation (Kamran *et al.*, 2023). Similarly, no significant relationships emerged among readiness, implementation extent, and performance (Moon, 2023).

Somehow, the positive preparedness-challenge correlations suggest that increased awareness and capability paradoxically heighten recognition of implementation difficulties rather than reducing them. More prepared teachers may possess greater sophistication in identifying systemic barriers, pedagogical complexities, and resource inadequacies that less prepared colleagues overlook or normalize. Acceptance was at a medium level, with classroom environment and seminars/training emerging as key correlates, suggesting structured environments and ongoing professional development empower teachers' acceptance (Olayer *et al.*, 2025). This pattern implies that preparedness development increases critical consciousness about inclusive education challenges, transforming naive optimism into informed realism about implementation requirements—a phenomenon reflecting professional growth rather than preparedness failure, though significant differences emerged between teachers' perceived preparedness for handling learners with special educational needs (Alido *et al.*, 2023).

Evidently, the weak correlation magnitudes reveal that preparedness and challenges operate substantially independently, indicating that systemic barriers persist regardless of individual teacher capacity levels. These findings challenged deficit models attributing implementation difficulties primarily to teacher unpreparedness, instead suggesting that structural constraints—policy gaps, resource limitations, administrative support deficits—constitute the primary obstacles. The skills preparedness showing strongest correlation implies that technical competency development most effectively reveals implementation complexities, highlighting the importance of practice-based professional development for building realistic understanding of inclusive education

demands alongside pedagogical capabilities, while training participation correlated significantly with teacher readiness (Moon, 2023).

Over and above, the preceding analyses collectively illuminate the multifaceted nature of inclusive education implementation, wherein individual teacher capacities intersect with institutional constraints to shape pedagogical realities. The convergence of moderate skills proficiency, inadequate infrastructure, and resource-dominated challenges points toward systemic rather than individual deficits as primary implementation barriers. The counterintuitive preparedness-challenge relationship further underscores the complexity of translating policy aspirations into classroom practice, revealing that awareness and capability development alone cannot overcome structural limitations. These interconnected findings necessitate a holistic interpretation that moves beyond isolated preparedness dimensions to address the broader institutional ecology within which inclusive education unfolds, informing evidence-based pathways toward sustainable implementation quality.

5. Recommendations

For future undertaking, the Department of Education could further strengthen inclusive education implementation by expanding competency-based training through the Learning and Development Coordinators' Network, emphasizing practical pedagogical workshops. Schools Division Offices may enhance accessibility by developing resource centers with assistive technologies and differentiated materials shared across cluster schools, building upon existing Special Education Fund utilization. Also, continued expansion of Special Education teacher deployment and Teacher Aide assignments would support schools serving learners with special educational needs. Moreover, leveraging School-Based Management Committees and Parent-Teacher Associations presents opportunities for mobilizing community resources. Aligning inclusive education initiatives with budget programming cycles and coordinating with Local School Boards could optimize resource allocation, supporting sustainable implementation within existing fiscal frameworks while honoring the Department's commitment to educational equity.

6. Conclusion

Cognizant of the overall empirical findings of the current study, this multi-school investigation across the Philippine basic education system reveals that inclusive education implementation confronts systemic capacity deficits transcending individual teacher readiness. While educators demonstrate adequate psychological preparedness, the convergence of moderate pedagogical skills and inadequate infrastructure creates formidable implementation barriers rooted in structural rather than dispositional

constraints. The paradoxical preparedness-challenge relationship indicates that capacity development heightens awareness of systemic inadequacies without eliminating them, suggesting that current policy frameworks have outpaced institutional capacity-building. Therefore, sustainable inclusive education quality within Philippine basic education necessitates comprehensive systemic transformation integrating professional development, resource allocation, and infrastructure enhancement to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all Filipino learners.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Ann Frances P. Cabigon currently serves as the Dean of the Student Affairs Office at Cebu Technological University. As a faculty member in the College of Education, she effectively combines her professional background to drive impactful student development programs. Her research interests include inclusive education and student wellness, with a strong focus on burnout management and academic resilience. Prof. Cabigon is a committed academic leader, dedicated to fostering a supportive, holistic environment that enhances the well-being and long-term success of every student at CTU.

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