



The Relationship between Strategies in Dealing with Disruptive Behavior and the Teachers' Perception of Their Preparedness in Teaching Students with Special Needs

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Teacher preparedness and behavior management remain critical aspects of inclusive education, especially as educators respond to the growing diversity of learners in Philippine classrooms. This study examined the relationship between strategies used in managing disruptive behavior and teachers' perception of their preparedness in teaching students with special needs. Employing a non-experimental descriptive-correlational design, the study involved 200 SPED and general education teachers from South Cotabato, selected through total enumeration sampling. Standardized instruments were used to assess levels of behavior management strategies—namely positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, and punishment—and multiple dimensions of

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teacher preparedness. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation were utilized for data analysis. Results showed that both strategy used and perceived preparedness were at a moderate level. However, no significant relationship was found between the two variables, indicating that the application of behavior management strategies alone does not influence how prepared teachers feel in inclusive settings. These findings highlight the importance of comprehensive training and institutional support systems to strengthen teacher readiness and inclusive practices in diverse educational contexts.

Keywords: *Disruptive behavior; teacher preparedness; inclusive education; special needs; behavior management strategies.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers' perception of their preparedness in teaching students with special needs had become a critical issue in the inclusive educational landscape (Sharma, U. et al. 2012). As more students with disabilities were integrated into general education classrooms, educators were expected to effectively manage diverse learning needs and behavioral challenges. However, many teachers—especially those without specialized training—struggled with confidence and competence in this area. Studies showed that teachers' perceived preparedness influenced their instructional decisions and ability to implement inclusive practices (Sharma et al. 2012; Jordan, et al., 2009). This perception was shaped not only by formal training but also by daily classroom experience, school support, and access to resources (Billingsley, et al. 2017).

Teacher who lacks sufficient training in managing disruptive behaviors often face greater emotional exhaustion and challenges in maintaining effective instruction. As a result, students may experience inconsistent learning environments, contributing to lower academic performance (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Student with special needs often faced exclusion, misunderstanding, or disciplinary practices that failed to support their individual development. The lack of preparedness resulted in inconsistent or reactive behavior management strategies, which further complicated teaching and learning (Westling, 2010). In turn, the broader goal of fostering inclusive and equitable classrooms became more difficult to achieve, and the burden often fell disproportionately on teachers who felt unsupported.

The urgency of addressing this issue was underscored by global and national education mandates. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 called for inclusive,

equitable, and quality education for all (UNESCO, 2015). In the Philippines, inclusive education was reinforced by the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (RA 10533) and the Inclusive Education Act of 2022 (RA 11650), which required schools to accommodate learners with disabilities across all levels. Despite these legal frameworks, many teachers—particularly in underserved areas like South Cotabato—continued to report inadequate training and limited access to continuous professional development. The socio-cultural diversity and lack of systemic support in these regions further heightened the challenges of inclusive teaching (Cabrera & Villena, 2021).

Despite efforts to implement inclusive education, there was a noticeable gap in research that connected teachers' preparedness with the specific strategies they used to manage disruptive behaviors (O'Neill & Stephenson, 2013). Much of the existing literature focused on policy implementation or teacher attitudes, with less attention given to how personal perceptions of readiness affected classroom behavior management (Jordan et al. 2009). This study sought to address this gap by exploring the relationship between the strategies teachers used to deal with disruptive behavior and their perception of preparedness in teaching students with special needs. The results of this study aimed to provide evidence-based insights for improving professional development programs and strengthening inclusive practices in real classroom settings (Mahvar et al., 2018).

This study aimed to determine the relationship between strategies used in dealing with disruptive behavior and the teachers' perception of their preparedness in teaching students with special needs. Specifically, it investigated the level of implementation of behavior management strategies, including positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, and punishment.

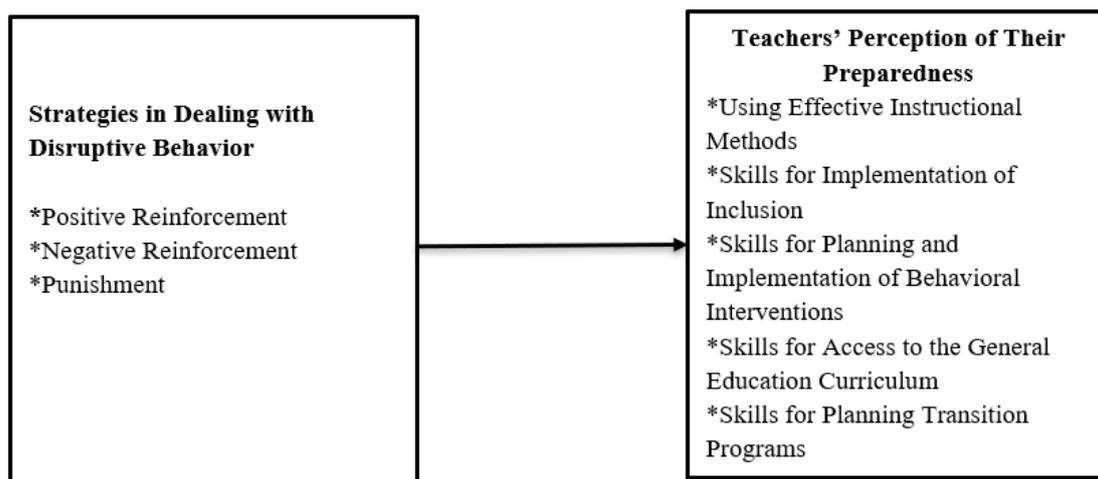


Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework of Study

The study hypothesized that there was no significant relationship between strategies in dealing with disruptive behavior and teachers' perception of their preparedness in teaching students with special needs.

This study was anchored in B.F. Skinner's Operant Conditioning Theory (1953), which emphasized that behavior was shaped by its consequences. Reinforcement strategies aimed to increase desirable behavior, while punishment sought to reduce undesirable actions—an approach widely used in managing students with disruptive behavior.

2. METHODS

This study employed a quantitative-correlational research design. It sought to determine the relationship between the behavior management strategies used by teachers and their perception of preparedness in teaching students with special needs. This design was appropriate as it allowed for the measurement and analysis of the strength and direction of relationships between the variables.

The research was conducted in selected public schools in South Cotabato that offered Special Education programs. This location was chosen due to its socio-cultural diversity and the active implementation of inclusive education practices in the region.

The respondents were 200 SPED and general education teachers who were handling students

with special needs in inclusive or self-contained settings. A total enumeration sampling technique was used to select participants who had at least one year of experience and who had managed disruptive behaviors in their classrooms. This ensured that the data collected was grounded in actual teaching experiences.

The main research instrument used in this study was a structured survey questionnaire consisting of two parts, designed to assess (1) the strategies used by teachers in managing disruptive behaviors and (2) their perception of preparedness in teaching students with special needs in inclusive settings.

Part I evaluated teachers' views on the implementation of inclusive education. It used a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not Utilized) to 4 (Highly Utilized) and covered themes such as policy issues, teacher attitudes, training, available resources, and curriculum flexibility.

Part II of the questionnaire focused on the teachers' level of preparedness. This section was adapted from the work of Aldabas, (2020) and used a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not Prepared) to 4 (Very Prepared). It assessed specific domains such as collaboration, instructional methods, inclusion skills, behavioral planning, access to the general education curriculum, and transition planning.

Upon receiving approval from school administrators and the research ethics committee, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to selected teachers either in

person or online through the use of Google Forms. An orientation was conducted to explain the purpose and content of the instrument. Respondents were given ample time to complete the survey. All data collected were handled with strict confidentiality.

This study ensured the protection of the rights and privacy of its participants. All respondents were asked to sign an informed consent form. Participation was voluntary. All data were treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes. The researcher ensured that no psychological, emotional, or professional harm was caused by participating in the study.

3. RESULTS

Presented in Table 1 was the descriptive result of the mean scores and standard deviations of the strategies used by teachers in managing disruptive behaviors, as well as their perceived preparedness in teaching students with special needs. The study utilized a 4-point Likert scale to measure both the implementation of behavior management strategies and the level of teacher preparedness. The overall mean score for behavior management strategies was 2.89 with a standard deviation of 0.43, which fell under the interpretation of "High." This indicated that teachers generally applied behavior management techniques in their classrooms. Specifically, the mean for positive reinforcement was 2.88, for negative reinforcement it was 2.89, and for punishment it was also 2.88, demonstrating a balanced application across the three strategies.

In terms of perceived preparedness, the overall mean was 2.88 with a standard deviation of 0.23, interpreted as "Prepared." This suggested that

teachers considered themselves moderately prepared to teach students with special needs. Among the indicators, the highest mean scores were recorded in Skills for Implementation of Inclusion and Skills for Access to the General Education Curriculum, both with a mean of 2.90. This reflected teachers' stronger confidence in implementing inclusive practices and ensuring curriculum accessibility. On the other hand, the lowest mean score was noted in Skills for Planning Transition Programs, which received a rating of 2.85, indicating a slightly lower level of preparedness in guiding students with special needs through educational transitions or life beyond school.

Shown in Table 2 was the Pearson correlation coefficient, $r = -0.017$, which indicated a very weak relationship between the strategies used in managing disruptive behaviors and the teachers' perceived preparedness. The p -value was 0.816, which described the relationship between the strategies used in managing disruptive behaviors and the teachers' perceived preparedness. The negative correlation was very weak and statistically not significant, as the p -value was greater than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted, indicating that there was no significant relationship between the use of behavior management strategies and the teachers' perception of their preparedness in teaching students with special needs.

This suggested that although teachers had been using behavior management strategies and reported feeling moderately prepared, these two factors did not significantly influence each other. In other words, the frequency or type of strategy used did not appear to have a measurable impact on how prepared teachers felt in educating students with special needs.

Table 1. Descriptive Table

Variables	SD	Mean	Description
Strategies Used by Teachers in Managing Disruptive Behaviors	0.43	2.89	High
Positive Reinforcement	0.38	2.88	High
Negative Reinforcement	0.38	2.89	High
Punishment	0.43	2.88	High
Perceived Preparedness of Teachers	0.23	2.88	High
Using Effective Instructional Methods	0.40	2.86	High
Skills for Implementation of Inclusion	0.42	2.90	High
Skills for Planning and Implementation of Behavioral Interventions	0.55	2.89	High
Skills for Access to the General Education Curriculum	0.64	2.90	High
Skills for Planning Transition Programs	0.48	2.85	High

Table 2. Table of Correlation

	r	Perceived Preparedness of Teachers		
		p-value	Decision on H0	Interpretation
Strategies Used by Teachers in Managing Disruptive Behaviors	-.017	.816	Accept	Not Significant

4. DISCUSSION

The findings showed that SPED and general education teachers in South Cotabato frequently used a variety of behavior management strategies and perceived themselves as moderately prepared to teach students with special needs. The high ratings across positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, and punishment indicated a well-rounded approach to managing disruptive behaviors. Teachers also expressed confidence in implementing inclusive practices and providing access to the general education curriculum. However, their lower sense of preparedness in planning transition programs highlighted a gap that required targeted professional development. These findings aligned with Sharma, et al. (2012), who noted that while teachers often felt capable in delivering general instruction, they tended to feel underprepared in specialized aspects of inclusion. Similarly, Jordan et al. (2009) emphasized that teacher confidence in inclusive settings was influenced not just by the strategies they used but also by the depth of their training and institutional support.

The correlation result indicated that the frequency or type of behavioral strategies applied in the classroom did not influence how prepared teachers felt in handling inclusive education. This implied that even though teachers reported using various strategies and felt moderately prepared, these two factors operated independently. Such a finding aligned with Jordan, et al. (2009), who emphasized that teacher preparedness was more deeply rooted in the quality of training and institutional support rather than in classroom strategy use alone. Similarly, Forlin & Black (2011) highlighted that comprehensive professional development programs were essential in fostering teachers' confidence and competence in inclusive settings, beyond their day-to-day behavior management practices.

This study aimed to determine the relationship between the strategies employed in managing disruptive behavior and teachers' perception of their preparedness in teaching students with special needs. The findings revealed that while

both the use of behavior management strategies and the level of perceived preparedness were rated as moderate, there was no significant relationship between the two variables. This suggested that the application of strategies alone—rooted in Skinner's Operant Conditioning Theory—was not sufficient to enhance teachers' sense of preparedness for inclusive education. Consequently, the study underscored the importance of implementing more comprehensive and sustained professional development programs, institutional support systems, and inclusive training efforts to effectively equip teachers in meeting the diverse needs of learners with special needs.

In response to global education challenges and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which advocates for inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all, this study recommends a multi-faceted approach to strengthening inclusive practices. Key strategies include enhancing professional development through targeted training on behavior management and inclusive pedagogy (Forlin & Chambers, 2011), and contextualizing national inclusion policies to meet the diverse realities of rural and underserved schools (Cabrera & Villena, 2021). The establishment of mentoring systems between SPED and general education teachers is encouraged to foster collaboration and shared expertise. Additionally, developing structured tools for transition planning is crucial, as many teachers report low preparedness in this area. Finally, investing in evidence-based programs rooted in behavioral theory and inclusive education principles is essential to ensure that strategies are both practical and theoretically sound (Simonsen et al., 2008).

5. CONCLUSION

This study looked into how teachers manage disruptive behavior and how prepared they feel to teach students with special needs. While both behavior strategies and preparedness were rated highly, the results showed no strong link between the two. This means that just using behavior strategies isn't enough to make teachers feel ready for inclusive teaching. Instead, their sense

of preparedness seems to come more from quality training, hands-on experience, and strong support from their schools. These findings remind us that teachers need more than tools—they need guidance, encouragement, and ongoing learning. To truly support inclusive education, we must invest in long-term professional development and create systems that help teachers grow and feel confident in what they do.

CONSENT

As per international standards or university standards, respondents' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

ETHICAL APPROVAL

As per international standards or university standards written ethical approval has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Authors hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of this manuscript.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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