Experiences of Special Education Teachers Teaching in Panabo City Division: A Phenomenological Study

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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

This study explored the experiences of Special Education teachers in Panabo City Division, anchored on the Social Cognitive Theory of Bandura. Qualitative research using the phenomenological approach was used as a design. Ten (10) special education teachers in Panabo City Division were carefully selected for in-depth interview (IDI). A validated interview guide was used to gather the desired data. Major themes derived from the experiences were emotional and physical demands, support systems, and coping strategies, and reward and fulfilment. Additionally, major themes derived from the challenges faced by special education teachers were challenging behaviors and lack of parents' support. On the other hand, the emergent themes in strategies to address diverse needs include differentiated instructions, multi-sensory learning approach and rewards and recognitions, Major themes drawn in perceptions of teacher's role in special education were advocacy and support, and collaboration and inclusion. Furthermore, major themes emerged in insights and reflections in special education teaching were patience and persistence, empathy,

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and professional growth. The themes were thoroughly discussed, defined, and reinforced with existing studies and literature. Thus, findings of this study underscored importance in prioritizing programs for special education. Increase funding resources to support special education programs and services, along with the development and implementation of inclusive policies. Professional development initiatives should also be prioritized so with the training in adaptive teaching methods and collaborative practices. These measures create more comprehensive and supportive learning environments to students with disabilities.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Special education is a vital component of inclusive education systems, aiming to provide tailored support and opportunities for students with diverse learning needs [1]. Within the educational landscape of Panabo City Division, the provision of special education services is essential for ensuring equitable access to quality education for all learners, including those with disabilities. However, the effectiveness of special education programs relies heavily on the expertise and experiences of special education teachers [2-4].

Recent research has emphasized the crucial role of special education teachers in meeting the diverse needs of students with disabilities and fostering inclusive educational settings [5]. For example, special education teachers often tailor individualized instruction to match each student's unique learning style and abilities, ensuring equitable access to education for all learners. Additionally, they collaborate with other teachers and parents to develop comprehensive support plans and accommodations that address the specific challenges faced by students with disabilities [6-9]. These examples illustrate the multifaceted responsibilities of special education teachers and highlight their importance in promoting positive outcomes for students with diverse learning needs [10,11,12,13,14].

In the context of Panabo City Division, localized insights into the experiences of special education teachers are essential for informing policy and practice initiatives tailored to the unique needs of the division. A phenomenological approach offers a valuable lens through which to explore the lived experiences of special education teachers, allowing for a deep understanding of their perspectives, challenges, and strategies in teaching students with disabilities [15,16,17]. This study aims to fill this gap by conducting a phenomenological inquiry on the experiences of special education teachers in Panabo City Division [18-20]. By exploring their encounters, challenges, and successes, the research provides actionable insights that can inform the development of effective support systems and interventions to enhance the quality of special education provision in the Department of Education [21-22]. The absence of localized research on special education in Panabo City Division hampers the development of targeted policies and practices, diminishes the effectiveness of educational interventions, and compromises the outcomes for students with disabilities. Addressing this gap through rigorous research is essential to ensure that all students receive the support and resources they need to thrive in inclusive learning environments.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

Social Cognitive Theory, proposed by Bandura in 1986, is the fundamental theory in the study. This theory offers a comprehensive framework for comprehending how behavior is shaped by personal factors, environmental contexts, and reciprocal interactions. In the unique context of special education where teachers work with diverse learners with unique needs, Social Cognitive Theory helps researchers understand why teachers behave in certain ways, how they respond to challenges, and what factors contribute to their professional experiences. Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the critical role of beliefs and self-efficacy in shaping behavior. For special education teachers, their beliefs about their students' abilities, their own teaching efficacy, and their confidence in managing challenges significantly impact their experiences in the classroom.

1.3 Research Questions

This study aimed to discover experiences of special education teachers, teaching in Panabo

City Division and sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of special education teachers in Panabo City Division while teaching students with disabilities?
2. What challenges do special education teachers face in Panabo City Division?
3. What strategies do special education teachers in Panabo City Division employ to address diverse needs of students with disability?
4. How do special education teachers perceive their role in supporting students with special needs?
5. What significant insights can special education teachers in Panabo City Division share from their experiences in teaching special education?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

Qualitative design utilizing the phenomenological approach was employed in this study to find out the experiences of special education teachers teaching in Panabo City Division. The research aimed at understanding and describing individuals' subjective experiences of a particular phenomenon. (Moustakas, 1994).

2.2 Sampling Techniques

The study utilized purposive sampling, intentionally selecting ten participants who possess in-depth experience with the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This sampling technique was employed to ensure that the selected participants could offer rich and detailed descriptions of their experiences, thereby providing valuable insights into the research topic.

All participants have a minimum of 5 years of teaching experience in special education, with each of the ten participants teaching at the elementary level (grades K-6). The participants' ages range from 30 to 50 years, with an average age of 42. The sample is composed entirely of female teachers, all of whom hold special education units. This detailed demographic information provides a comprehensive view of the sample's characteristics, aiding in the interpretation of findings and consideration of potential biases in the study.

2.3 Research Instrument

The main instrument used in collecting data was the researcher-made interview guide validated by three (3) experts. This instrument guided the researcher to explore the experiences of special education teachers teaching in Panabo City Division through in-depth interview. The instrument contained five questions to contribute to the validity and comprehensiveness of the study.

2.4 Date Collection Procedure

This study followed a systematic approach in gathering data. In-depth interviews were chosen as a method to obtain rich and detailed insights into participants' experiences and perspectives related to the research topic. Participants were selected based on their relevance to the research focus, using purposive sampling to ensure diversity and depth of perspectives. Before the interviews commenced, participants were provided with informed consent forms detailing the study's purpose, confidentiality measures, and the voluntary nature of their participation.

Interviews were conducted in person, each lasting approximately one hour. The interview protocol, developed beforehand, consisted of open-ended questions designed to explore key themes and topics while allowing participants the freedom to elaborate on their responses. These interviews were conducted in comfortable and private settings, where the interviewer established rapport and encouraged open communication.

Audio recordings were made with the participants' consent, and notes were taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual information. Following the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed to ensure accuracy. The data management process included securely storing the audio recordings and transcripts, ensuring participant confidentiality. Transcripts were analyzed using thematic or narrative analysis to identify key patterns and themes.

The data collection process continued until thematic saturation was reached, indicating a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study. This detailed approach to data collection ensured that the study gathered robust and meaningful insights from the participants.

2.5 Data Analysis

In the data analysis phase of the qualitative study, thematic analysis was employed as described by Braun and Clarke [23] to identify certain patterns, themes and significant insights within the transcripts. This approach involved several iterative steps to systematically organize and interpret the data. Initially, transcripts were read multiple times to increase familiarity with the content and to identify initial themes. Coding framework was developed, which involved systematically creating descriptive labels or codes to segment the data that captured key concepts, ideas, or experiences (Guest et al., 2012). Codes were refined and revised through ongoing comparison and discussion among the research team to ensure consistency and rigor (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Once coding was completed, codes were organized into broader themes or patterns that encapsulated commonalities across participants' experiences and perspectives [23]. These themes were further refined and defined through constant comparison, whereby similarities and differences within the data were examined developing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study (Charmaz, 2006). Through this iterative and reflexive process, the data analysis phase yielded rich understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives, contributing to the overall aims and objectives of this study [24,25].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings from the analysis of the data gathered among the key informants in the Schools Division of Panabo City. The emergent themes generated by the analysis are presented, accompanied by a thorough analysis. Codenames were given to research participants to maintain anonymity in the primary presentation of the results.

3.1 Experiences of Special Education Teachers

The researchers defined these themes, discussed them thoroughly, enriched them with core ideas, and supported them with existing studies and literature.

3.1.1 Emotional and physical demands

According to Friend and Bursuck, (2018), a special education teacher faces high levels of stress and burnout due to the emotional and physical demands of role. Balancing the individual needs of students, managing challenging behaviors, and attending to administrative tasks all contribute to teacher burnout in special education. Furthermore, Avramidis and Norwich (2002) note that special education teachers often experience emotional stress related to advocating for students, collaborating with parents and other professionals, and navigating complex educational systems.

> *Attending to administrative duties all contribute to teacher burnout in special education.-P1*

Emotional and physical demands are prevalent in special education teaching due to the unique nature of the students' needs and the responsibilities associated with supporting them. Additionally, special education teachers must address challenging behaviors, adapt curriculum materials, and provide individualized instruction to meet each student's needs, which can be emotionally and physically taxing.

> *Juggling the diverse needs of students, addressing challenging behaviors, and attending to administrative duties all contribute to teacher burnout in special education.-P2*

Moreover, ensuring a safe learning environment is a critical aspect of special education teaching, as students with disabilities may have unique safety considerations. Special education teachers must implement safety protocols, address environmental hazards, and provide supervision and support to ensure the physical well-being of all students. This may involve implementing strategies to prevent accidents or injuries, ensuring accessibility in classroom design, and collaborating with other professionals to address safety concerns.

> *Ensure a safe learning environment.-P3*

Furthermore, another important aspect of special education teaching requires physical support and accommodations. Special education teachers may need to provide assistance with mobility aids to help students navigate the physical environment and implement accessibility measures to ensure equal access to learning opportunities.

Table 1. Major themes and core ideas on the experiences of special education teachers

Themes	Core Ideas
Emotional and Physical Demands	• *Managing the diverse emotional needs of students P1*
	• *Juggling the diverse needs of students, addressing challenging behaviors, and attending to administrative duties all contribute to teacher burnout in special education.P2*
	• *Ensuring a safe learning environment.P3*
	• *Assisting students with mobility issues. P4*
	• *Significant stress and burnout due to the intense emotional and physical demands of roles.P4*
Support Systems and Coping Strategies	• *Support from co- teachers to navigate the challenges of special education teaching.P2*
	• *-Self-care practices such as mindfulness helps manage stress and prevent burnout.P3*

I often assist students with mobility issues. P4

Special education teaching entails significant emotional and physical demands, as teachers strive to meet diverse needs of students with disability while ensuring a safe and inclusive learning environment. The management of students' emotional needs, juggling of diverse needs while addressing challenging behaviors, and providing physical assistance all contribute to the complex profession.

Moreover, teaching in special education is associated with high level of stress and burnout as a result of their physical and emotional role demand. (Friend & Bursuck, 2018; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Ensuring a safe learning environment and assisting students with mobility issues are integral aspects of special education teaching that require careful attention and support (Slee, 2011). By recognizing and addressing the emotional and physical demands of special education teaching, policymakers and education leaders can work together to promote the well-being of special education teachers and enhance the overall quality of special education services.

3.1.2 Support systems and coping strategies

Support systems and coping strategies are important for special education teachers to navigate demands of their profession effectively. Support from co-teachers is invaluable in addressing the diverse needs of students and managing the complexities of special education teaching (Giangreco, Edelman, & Broer, 2001). Collaborating with colleagues allows teachers to share resources, exchange ideas, and seek advice, fostering a sense of camaraderie and mutual support that can alleviate feelings of isolation and overwhelm (Graham, 2006).

I appreciate the support from co- teachers to navigate the challenges of special education teaching.-P2

Self-care practices such as mindfulness are essential for special education teachers to manage stress and prevent burnout. By prioritizing their own well-being, teachers can recharge and replenish their energy, enabling them to better support their students and fulfil their professional responsibilities. Research has shown that self-care practices foster positive effects on teacher well-being ultimately contributing to more effective teaching and improved student outcomes (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; O'Brien & Shackleton, 2014).

When the situation gets tough, I practice self-care such as mindfulness to help manage stress and prevent burnout.-P3

Support systems and coping strategies are essential components of special education teaching that help teachers navigate the emotional and physical demands of their role. By fostering supportive relationships with colleagues and prioritizing self-care practices, special education teachers can better manage stress, prevent burnout, and provide high-quality support to their students.

These experiences of special education teachers align with key principles of Social Cognitive Theory, emphasizing the reciprocal relationship

between cognitive processes, behavior, and environmental influences. Examining these experiences through the framework of SCT provides insights into the cognitive and social mechanisms that underlie teachers' responses to the challenges of special education teaching, as well as the strategies employed to promote well-being and resilience.

3.2 Challenges Faced by Special Education Teachers

3.2.1 Managing challenging behaviors

In the classroom setting, teachers frequently encountered misbehaviors of students with disabilities. Challenging behaviors exhibited by special learners can pose significant challenges to teachers due to their disruptive nature and impact on the learning environment. A study by McIntosh et al. (2014) found that disorderly behaviors can disrupt instructional time and negatively impact the academic progress of all students in the classroom. Furthermore, behaviors such as napping during class hours and roaming around the classroom can create safety concerns and detract from the overall learning experience (McIntosh et al., 2014).

Saying profanities, not paying attention to teachers, and napping during class hours were great challenges in teaching special education. -P2

They communicate in an impolite manner.-P4

Managing challenging behaviors requires a proactive and individualized approach that takes into account the unique needs and circumstances of each student. This can be particularly challenging in inclusive classrooms where teachers are responsible for the needs of diverse learners with varying levels of support (Dybvik, 2016).

3.2.2 Lack of parents' support

Studies by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) and O'Donnell (2008) emphasize the importance of parental reinforcement of strategies and interventions at home. When parents are inconsistent in supporting the strategies implemented by teachers, it can undermine the effectiveness of interventions and lead to inconsistencies in behavior management and skill development (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; O'Donnell, 2008).

Lack of parental reinforcement of strategies at home, leading to inconsistency in support.-P6

Furthermore, parental resistance to implementing recommended accommodations or interventions can pose significant barriers to student success.

Parents were resistant to implementing recommended accommodations or interventions. -P5

Research by Epstein and Sheldon (2002) highlights the role of parental attitudes and beliefs in shaping their willingness to collaborate with educators and support their child's special education needs. When parents are resistant to recommended interventions, it can hinder the implementation of effective supports and impede the student's progress (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002).

Aligned with Social Cognitive Theory, which highlights the reciprocal relationship between individuals, their behaviors, and the social environment, this exploration of how teachers manage these challenges provides insights into the interaction of cognitive processes, behavior, and environmental factors in special education contexts. This understanding informs strategies aimed at promoting positive outcomes for students.

3.3 Strategies to Address Diverse Needs

3.3.1 Differentiated instruction

Differentiated instruction is crucial in special education as it recognizes the diverse needs of students and ensures equitable access to learning opportunities. Tomlinson and Allan (2000) emphasize that differentiated instruction involves modifying instruction, content, and assessment to accommodate students' diverse learning needs.

Modifying instruction, content, and assessment.-P5

By incorporating differentiated instruction within the framework of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), teachers can provide personalized support that addresses students' individual strengths, challenges, and learning styles.

Table 2. Major themes and core ideas on the challenges faced by special education teachers

Theme	Core Ideas
Challenging Behaviors	• Saying profanities, not paying attention to teachers, napping during class hours P2 • Communicating with teacher impolite manner P4
Lack of Parents' Support	• Lack of parental reinforcement of strategies at home, leading to inconsistency in support P6 • Resistant to implementing recommended accommodations or interventions. P5 • Irresponsiveness from parents regarding their child's special education needs.P6

Table 3. Major Themes and core ideas on the teachers' strategies to address diverse needs

Theme	Core Idea
Differentiated Instruction	• Curriculum differentiation and individualization-P4 • Modifying instruction, content, and assessment-P5 • Individualized education programs-P2
Multi-Sensory Learning Approaches	• Implementing tactile experiences P4 • Integrating movement-based activities P3
Rewards and Recognitions	• Recognitions to award recipients and showcase their accomplishments.P6 • Individualized rewards tailored to their interests and preferences. P9

We use individualized education programs.-P2
-We in special education use curriculum differentiation and individualization.-P4

3.3.2 Multi-sensory learning approaches

Multi-sensory learning approaches are crucial in special education as they provide diverse learning styles to enhance student comprehension. Multi-sensor approaches often incorporate tactile experiences, such as hands-on activities and the use of manipulative, to engage students and reinforce learning concepts.

Implementing tactile experiences. -P4

Research by Dunn and Dunn (1993) suggests that incorporating tactile experiences into instruction can benefit students with diverse learning needs, including those with sensory processing differences or tactile learning preferences. By providing opportunities for students to interact with materials and manipulate objects, teachers can facilitate deeper understanding and retention of content.

However, movement-based activities, such as role-playing, simulations, and physical exercises,

are also integral components of multi-sensory learning approaches. Research by Ratey (2008) indicates that physical activity can enhance cognitive function, improve attention and focus, and support academic achievement.

In my class, I'm integrating movement-based activities.-P3

Integrating movement-based activities into instruction not only engages students physically but also stimulates brain activity and promotes active learning.

3.3.3 Rewards and recognitions

Social cognitive theory highlights the significance of observational learning and social reinforcement in influencing behaviour (Bandura, 1977). When special children receive rewards and recognition for their efforts and achievements, they observe and internalize these experiences, which can enhance their self-efficacy beliefs and motivation to continue striving for success.

We give them recognitions and showcase their accomplishments to motivate them.-P6

Furthermore, individualized rewards tailored to the specific interests, preferences, and abilities of children with special needs can enhance their motivation to participate in learning activities and engage in positive behaviors (García-Sánchez, Fuentes & Gras, 2019). When students perceive that their efforts are recognized and valued, they are more likely to feel motivated to exert effort and achieve success (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

> *To motivate them, I am giving individualized rewards tailored to their interests and preferences.-P9*

The responses of key informants supported the idea that providing individualized rewards and recognition for children with special needs can have multifaceted implications for their motivation, self-esteem, relationships, and learning experiences. By acknowledging and celebrating their unique contributions and achievements, teachers can create supportive environments that promote positive outcomes for all special students.

Rewards and recognition play a significant role in motivating students with special needs. Social cognitive theory highlights the importance of observational learning and social reinforcement in influencing behavior (Bandura, 1977). By providing individualized rewards tailored to students' interests and preferences, teachers can enhance their motivation to participate in learning activities and engage in positive behaviors (P6, P9). These experiences reflect the principles of social cognitive theory by demonstrating how observational learning and social reinforcement

shape students' behavior and motivation in the classroom.

3.4 Perceptions of the Teacher's Role

3.4.1 Advocacy and support

Based on key informants' idea, advocacy and support for children in special education are vital for safeguarding rights, promoting access to resources and services. By advocating for policies, practices, and initiatives that prioritize the needs and rights of children with disabilities, teachers contribute to creating inclusive and supportive learning environments where all children can thrive.

> *As special education teacher, I perceive my role as advocate, ensuring access to support and resources for my student's success. -P4*

> *My responsibility involves advocating support to students with special needs, ensuring they receive the resources essential for their success.-P5*

Additionally, involving families and communities in the advocacy process fosters collaboration and partnership" (Turnbull et al., 2020). Supporting families with children who have special needs is an integral aspect of the teacher's role. It is essential because parents also require support to thrive and effectively assist their child in reaching their full potential. By extending support to families, teachers not only strengthen the home-school bond but also enhance the overall support system surrounding the child.

Table 4. Themes and core ideas in the perceptions of teacher's role

Theme	Core Ideas
Advocacy and Support	• Advocates, ensuring access to support and resources for student with special needs. P4 P5
	• Provide emotional support for parents and academic support for students P6
	• Building relationships with students and families.P7
	• Encouragement and guidance throughout educational journey.P9
Collaboration and Inclusion	• Collaboration with co-teachers, parents, and stakeholders. P1
	• Fostering inclusive environments and support plans.P3
	• Create inclusive classrooms where all students feel valued and supported.P10
	• Promote a sense of belongingness.P2

Table 5. Themes and core ideas on insights and reflections

Theme	Core Idea
Patience and Persistence	• Additional time and support to master basic education concepts or develop social skills. P1, P5
	• Understand that progress may be gradual and celebrate even the smallest achievements as significant milestones.P4 P5
Empathy	• Understand students' needs. P3, P7
	• Recognize the importance of understanding and connecting with students on an emotional level.P9, P10
Professional Growth	• Commitment to continuous learning and development. P6, P2

I provide emotional and academic support, promoting overall well-being of children with special needs."P6

According to the key informants' idea, the role of teachers as supporters and advocates for children with special needs has an impact on the educational journey and overall well-being of these students. Additionally, teachers provide vital support to parents as they perform the responsibilities of raising a child with special needs. This combined approach between teachers, families, and other stakeholders fosters a strong support system around the child, enhancing their chances of success.

3.4.2 Collaboration and inclusion

The key informants' idea emphasized the significance of collaborative approaches among teachers, parents, and other stakeholders in providing effective support for students with special needs. By working together, teachers can leverage their collective expertise, and share resources to develop comprehensive support plans tailored to individual students' needs.

We collaborate with co-teachers, parents, and stakeholders.-P1

Fostering inclusive environments and support plans.-P3

Moreover, in line with the informants' perspective, advocating for policies and practices that prioritize special children's needs allows teachers to contribute in creating a more conducive learning environment where students with special needs feel valued and included.

We strive to create inclusive classrooms where all students feel valued and supported.-P10

Promote a sense of belongingness.-P2

Based on the informants' responses, teachers' roles in teaching special education had a profound impact. Their dedication to supporting students with unique needs, their unwavering belief in the potential of every child, and their relentless advocacy for inclusion and equity touch the lives of not only their students but also their families, communities, and society at large. Through their selfless acts of kindness, patience, and understanding, special education teachers have the power to inspire, uplift, and transform lives, leaving a special mark on the hearts and minds of all those they encounter.

These experiences echo the principles of Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes how individuals' actions, thoughts, and surroundings interact. Special education teachers exemplify this theory in action through their advocacy and collaborative efforts. By fostering inclusivity and belonging, they not only support their students but also shape their beliefs and behaviors, paving the way for positive outcomes.

3.5 Insights and Reflections

3.5.1 Patience and persistence

The responses of the key informants emphasized the need for patience and persistence in working with students with special needs requiring additional time and support to master basic education concepts or develop social skills. They understand that progress may be gradual.

We always extended our time and support to master basic education concepts or develop social skills. P1

Extended our time and support to master basic education. P5

The informants' response is supported in research by Bozkurt and Sen (2010), who emphasize the necessity of patience in special education settings, noting that progress for students with special needs may be incremental and nonlinear.

Understand that progress may be gradual and celebrate even the smallest achievements as significant milestones.-P4

We should always have patience because we know that their progress is slow.-P5

3.5.2 Empathy

Empathy is not just a desirable trait but a critical skill in special education teaching as it forms the foundation for caring to address the unique needs of students with diverse abilities. Special education teachers must go beyond mere sympathy to truly empathize with their students, recognizing and validating their experiences, challenges, and emotions. Research by Howley and Howley (2007) emphasizes the pivotal role of empathy in special education, highlighting its significance in promoting positive teacher-student relationships and facilitating effective communication.

As a special education teacher, I've learned that it's important to understand students' needs. This understanding helps us accept and care for them better.-P3

Understanding students' need is like knowing what makes them happy.-P7

Recognize the importance of understanding and connecting with students on an emotional level.-P9

Teaching with special children needs to have a sense of empathy putting your foot in their shoe to understand their emotion.-P10

Furthermore, Davis and Watson (2001) assert that empathetic connections between teachers and students foster a sense of trust and safety in

the classroom, enabling students to engage more fully in the learning process and take risks in their academic and social development.

3.5.3 Professional growth

Podell (1993) emphasize the significance of persistence in special education teaching, highlighting the need for teachers to remain committed to their students' growth and development despite challenges or setbacks. By acknowledging that progress may be gradual and embracing a patient and persistent approach, educators can create supportive environments that foster meaningful learning experiences for students with special needs.

I need to have commitment to continuous learning and development to help my students in education endeavor. -P6,

As a special education teacher, I recognize the importance of continuous professional development. I stay updated on practices and strategies in special education. Investing in my own professional growth allows me to better support diverse need of my pupils to improve learning outcome.-P2

Professional growth in teaching special children enables educators to stay abreast of emerging research and innovative strategies in the field. By participating in professional development activities such as workshops, conferences, and collaborative learning communities, teachers gain valuable insights and resources to support their students' diverse needs. Research by Desimone (2009) emphasizes the correlation between teacher professional development and student achievement, highlighting the importance of ongoing learning and skill refinement in improving instructional effectiveness.

In essence, the experiences shared by these teachers underscore the vital role of patience, empathy, and continuous professional growth in the special education landscape, reflecting the principles of Social Cognitive Theory in action. Through their persistent efforts to understand, support, and grow, these educators not only enhance the academic outcomes of their students but also foster environments of care, trust, and learning.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDA-TION

The insights gathered from the experiences of special education teachers in Panabo City Division reveal the intricate challenges they face and the vital role they play in fostering inclusive education. These teachers exhibit extraordinary resilience, empathy, and unwavering dedication to their students' well-being and academic success. Drawing from their experiences, several practical recommendations emerge to enhance both the practice and policy surrounding special education.

To start, it's crucial for educational authorities to prioritize the allocation of resources to address the shortage of specialized materials and support services. This means ensuring that special education teachers have access to assistive technologies and resources tailored to the diverse needs of their students. For instance, providing funding for tools like specialized software or sensory materials could significantly enhance the learning experiences of students with disabilities.

Moreover, schools should invest in robust support systems for special education teachers. This includes offering ongoing professional development opportunities that focus on practical skills like behavior management and differentiated instruction. By providing targeted training sessions and fostering collaboration among educators, schools can better equip teachers to meet the diverse needs of their students effectively.

Additionally, policymakers should streamline administrative processes and reduce bureaucratic hurdles for special education teachers. Simplifying paperwork requirements for Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and providing administrative support staff could alleviate some of the administrative burdens, allowing teachers to focus more on direct student support and intervention.

Furthermore, professional development initiatives should prioritize training in adaptive teaching methods and collaborative practices. Workshops and seminars should emphasize the creation of inclusive classroom environments and strategies for building positive teacher-student relationships. By facilitating interdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge exchange, schools

can empower special education teachers to continuously improve their practice and provide the best possible support for students with disabilities.

Lastly, creating supportive professional learning communities within schools is essential. Establishing teacher-led committees or interest groups focused on special education can foster a culture of collaboration and continuous learning. By providing opportunities for teachers to share experiences, insights, and best practices, schools can create a supportive environment where special education teachers feel empowered to excel in their roles and make a meaningful difference in the lives of their students.

5. IMPLICATIONS

The results of this phenomenological inquiry into the experiences of special education teachers in Panabo City Division offer valuable implications for practice, policy, and future research in the field of education:

5.1 Implications for Practice

Teachers in special education must prioritize the development of personalized instructional approaches and effective behavior management strategies to meet the diverse needs of students with special needs. This involves ongoing professional development and training to enhance teachers' skills and knowledge in supporting students' basic education and social-emotional development. Additionally, teachers should foster collaborative partnerships with colleagues, parents, and community stakeholders to ensure comprehensive support for students across home and school settings.

5.2 Implications for Policy

On a policy level, there is a need for increased funding and resources to support special education programs and services. Policymakers should prioritize the development and implementation of inclusive policies that promote equitable access to education for students with special needs. Additionally, policies should support ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers in special education to encourage teamwork among teachers, parents, and others to help students do better in school.

5.3 Implications for Future Research

Future research in special education should focus on examining the effectiveness of different instructional approaches and behavior management strategies in supporting students' academic and social-emotional development. Additionally, there is a need for research that explores the impact of collaborative partnerships between educators, parents, and community stakeholders on student outcomes. Additionally, there is a need to have long-term studies to see how inclusive policies affect students with special needs as they grow up. This will help figure out the best ways to help students succeed in the future. Overall, future research should focus on finding out what works best for students with special needs to make sure they have the support they need to do well.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) 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 manuscripts.

ETHICAL APPROVAL AND CONSENT

This research study employed ethical considerations paramount in ensuring the protection and well-being of all participants involved. Prior to their involvement, participants were given details regarding the purpose and procedures of the study. Informed consent to participate voluntarily was also served. Confidentiality measures were strictly adhered to, with all participants' data stored securely to protect their privacy. Throughout the study, every effort was made to minimize any potential risks or harm to participants and their welfare was prioritized at all times. Additionally, ethical guidelines and standards were set forth and strictly followed to ensure the integrity and credibility of this research. By upholding these ethical principles, the rights and well-being of participants were safeguarded, and the research was conducted with the utmost integrity and respect**.**

In adherence to ethical standards, all authors affirm securing explicit, written informed consent from the study participant (or authorized representatives) for the publication of this study and any accompanying images. This rigorous consent process underscores our commitment to respecting participants' rights and privacy in disseminating research findings.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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