

# School interventions and coping strategies of differently-abled students in mainstream schools: An analysis

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## ***Abstract***

The purpose of the present study entitled “School Interventions and Coping Mechanisms of Differently-Abled Students in Mainstream Schools: An Analysis” is to explore the day-to-day experiences of students who are both physically and verbally challenged. It aimed to identify the interventions done by the schools where they are enrolled and the coping strategies they use as they co-exist with regular students. The study used the descriptive qualitative method, conducted through a series of interviews and observations during the school year 2019-2020 in four (4) private schools in Silay City. As a result, the study shows that school interventions help students to progress toward coping and become more effective in attaining emotional and academic success. In this study, coping is placed within the context of the student’s progressive confrontation with his or her disability, including dealing with the school system, infrastructure, and teachers’ and students’ regards. After a series of coding and recoding, five primary themes emerged in the findings: Self- Esteem, Self-Concept, Self-Discipline, Motivation for self-improvement and Positive outlook. Findings of this research will be valuable for students, instructors, school administrators and researchers.

***Keywords:*** students, differently-abled, coping strategies, school system, Silay City

## **School interventions and coping strategies of differently-abled students in mainstream schools: An analysis**

### **1. Introduction**

A school is a place and a system where education takes place, regardless of the classification of students. Schools are classified into different categories like public, private, sectarian, non-sectarian, and the likes. There are also schools for children with special needs. However, children who are considered differently-abled are free to attend the regular schools, herein referred to as mainstream schools. Furthermore, many educators in mainstream schools do not have training on how to supervise students with special needs. Combining differently-abled students in mainstream schools is significant because it provides them a spirit of fitting in and they get to socialize with their peers and learn on an equal footing. More importantly, it grants them satisfaction because they do not feel alienated from the community (Kaplan, 2011).

Differently-Abled Students are those students with either physical disability or impairments that made them different from the other students in the class. These differently-abled students are entitled to the realization of all human rights specifically linked to their “freedom from any distinction, exclusion, reclusion or preference based their status, which has the purpose of or effect of impairing the human rights and individual freedom”; and “freedom from discrimination in access to housing, education, social services, health care or employment” (PDHPE, 2020).

Coping mechanisms are the strategies people often use in the face of stress and/or trauma to help manage painful or difficult emotions. Coping mechanisms can help people adjust to stressful events while helping them maintain their emotional well-being. (Cramer, 2015). These mechanisms serve as a means for the students to meet the difficulty that society brought. It is also one of their various alternatives to accept, improve, and bring out the best in them.

#### *1.1 Background of the study*

The right to equal education is not only observed in the Philippines but also in other countries like Scotland, Great Britain and the United States of America. The GIRFEC Getting it Right for Every Child project of Scotland seeks to meet the needs of all the children. The project aims to help the children, regardless of who they are, to grow up feeling loved, safe, and respected, in order for them to realize their own potential. Most children get all the help they can have from their family members and circles of friends but, in reality, the help of the community in the form of teachers, doctors, and nurses are also needed. GIRFEC makes sure that the children can get all these support at the right time from the right people (Girfec, 2012).

Great Britain, for its part, relies on the framework provided in “The Mental Capacity Act of Great Britain” to protect vulnerable people, including those with physical disabilities. (Mental capability Act of nice United Kingdom, 2010). The US Congress states: “*Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities.*” Hence, the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* provides a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children (<https://sites.ed.gov/idea>, 2010).

The study of Braithwaite and Eckstein (2011) focused on the instrumental support interactions from the perspective of the disabled and how physical assistance is communicatively managed with strangers and newer

acquaintances. Their findings revealed that differently abled persons need social support and assistance whether it was initiated by them or by nondisabled person and how help was communicated and managed with nondisabled others.

In 2008, Phelan et al. conducted a study on the type of characteristics that are the primary models of prejudice (race) and stigma (deviant behavior and identities and disease and disabilities). The study produced a typology of three functions of stigma and prejudice: keeping people down; keeping people in and keeping people away. This also led to their understanding of stigma and prejudices and the ability to reduce them. Differently-abled students who study in regular schools also experience these prejudices. In 2016, Capana et al. (2016) conducted an undergraduate study, measuring the coping abilities of disabled students in Silay City. As an offshoot of that study, the researcher conducted a qualitative analysis on the lived experiences of the differently-abled students who are enrolled in the regular school or mainstream schools and tried to find out the coping mechanisms of these students and the interventions done by the school to facilitate their studies.

### *1.2 Objectives of the study*

The main objective of this study is to seek out the interventions done by the regular colleges to assist the differently-abled students in their list, at the side of the ways that these differently-abled students use to cope in their studies. It additionally aims to work out the varsity behavior, difficulties, and header mechanisms of the respondents; perceive their learning capabilities and check their tutorial performance; classify interventions done by colleges, and construct themes from respondents' responses to inquiries.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

The study used the descriptive qualitative method of research conducted on differently-abled students enrolled in the four (4) private schools in Silay City, Negros Occidental, Philippines. 12 conversation partners enrolled in the basic education department of the four (4) schools who have a physical disability, aural impairment, visual impairment, and speech impairment participated in the data collection conducted through triangulation: In-depth interview (IDI); Focus Group Discussion (FGD); and Observation. The research procedure began with asking permission from the gatekeepers of the school – the Principals, to the proper conduct of the interviews and the observation method. The interview guide was subjected for validation and the consent of the respondents in the recording of the interviews was sought for ethical considerations. The observation was done to validate certain behavior and phenomena. After the in depth-interviews and focus group discussions, the outputs (recordings) were transcribed and cleaned, coded then recorded before the construct of themes. The themes were then analyzed for the translational implications that would give meaning to another field of knowledge.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

A survey before the study was conducted to determine the categories of respondents and the following were generated:

- Paraplegic: are those who have physical disabilities, impaired limbs (lower and upper); on wheelchairs
- Visually impaired: those who are partially blind; cross-eyed; with glaucoma or other eye illnesses
- Aurally impaired: those who are deaf but not mute; using hearing aids
- Speech Impaired: those who are lisping; stuttering; any other speech defects.

### *3.1 Conversation Partners*

To understand the demographic make-up of the conversation partners, five (5) of the 12 cases were

described in this portion. All the other cases who were not mentioned have slight disabilities which are mostly on the academic side. They belong to the slow learners who have problems in either communication or listening are still classified as differently-abled. To protect the identity of the conversation partners (CP), and to adhere to the privacy law, the CP's are labeled as Students A to L.

The first CP, Student A, is a 17-year-old Grade 11 student who lives at the House of Friendship. Her left eye is blind and her left hand is short. Although blind to the left, she has a strong kin of recognition and is very good at Arts. **Student B** is 19 years old Grade 12 student who also lives at the House of Friendship. His right foot was amputated and he walks with a crutch. He is into swimming and won the Regional Swimming Competition for Paraplegics. Student C sits in a wheelchair. Students D, E, and F are all Senior High School students who are living with their parents and have communication difficulties. **Student H** is also 19 and enrolled in Grade 11. She has no lower limbs from the knee down. She doesn't use the wheelchair but prefers to walk with her knees. She has a strong fighting spirit and she loves joining school contests. **Student I** is a 15-year-old Grade 9 student. She is deaf and she wears hearing aids. According to her, her dilemma is in understanding her teachers because her hearing aids often malfunction. She also stutters. Students J and K are slow learners. **Student L** is 17 and he has palsy. He lives with his parents in their small hut. He believes he is normal.

**Coding** - From the responses of the participants, certain codes were derived which were later grouped into themes. Generated codes are as follows;

For question 1, this was the question delivered to the respondents, How do you feel when you are inside the classroom?. The individual responses were: Student A replied using a soft voice, "We are at the lower part" (*Ara kami sa dalum*) (**Code A**). Student B was shy to answer the first question but later on, she responded, "Seems like I'm always the one they laugh at" (*Daw ako lang pirmi ang ginakadlawan*) (**Code B**). For Student H, she explained, "People like us are pitiful, always being laughed at." (*Kawawa po mga tulad naming laging pinagtatawan*) (Code B) While Student I claimed, "Sometimes, I want to cry coz it seems like we are different from them." (*Kis-a daw mahibi ko kay daw iban kami sa ila*) (**Code C**) and based on the expression showed by student L. She answered the question with a strong aura and stated that "I Don't Mind them at all" (*Wala ko sila ginasapak ya*) (**Code D**).

A Follow-up question occurs during the conversation, and it stated "How do your teacher react to your classmates' treatment of you? Student C replied, "Sir reprimands them" (*Ginaakigan sila ni Sir*) (**Code E**). While the response of student B was "Ma'am said not to pay attention to them because what is important is that we go to school" (*hambal ni Maam, indi lang sila pagsapakon kay ang importante, nagaeskwela kami*) (**Code F**) and for student H, she replied to the question with conviction, " Our teacher said we should not feel that we are lower than them. She said we are equal". (**Code F**).

Sub-themes constructed based on the responses are:

- Code A = Lower Class
- Code B = Laughing Stock
- Code C = Different from other
- Code D = Nonchalant
- Code E = Supportive Teacher
- Code F = Teacher Motivates

For question 2, the respondents were asked how do they compare their abilities to their classmates. These are the individual responses expressed by the respondents. During the interview, Student C was very attentive but couldn't answer the question directly but later on, after composing some thoughts, she answered, "Even if I cannot stand, I can do PE." (*Bisan indi ko ka tindog, kaya ko mag PE.*) (**Code G**) Student A also answered that "I am stronger than them" (*Mas bakod pa ko sa ila*) (**Code H**) On the other hand, because of nervousness felt by Student B he didn't have the full attention to listen before the interview began but after given some time when he was asked, he replied, "I'm a champion swimmer. I got a medal in the paraplegic swimming competition"

(*Champion swimmer ko bala, Nakakakuha po ako ng medal sa paraplegic swimming competition*) (**Code I**) and as the interview being progressed, the researcher noticed that the student kept on rolling her eyes, and can't look directly to the interviewer but at the end, Student H replied, "I'm with honors, Ma'am. I'm doing good, even if I'm on wheelchair" (*With honors ko, Ma'am* " *I'm doing good po even if I'm on my wheelchair*) (**Code J**)

Sub-themes constructed based on the responses are:

- Code G = Able though disable
- Code H = Strong and able
- Code I = Achiever
- Code J = Academically competent

For question 3, this was the question delivered to the respondents "How do you train yourself to be good in the class?. As the interview was being conducted, the researcher noticed that at first, Student A was shy to answer the question given to her, and kept on looking down, but when she was asked, she replied, "I discipline myself so I can graduate" (*ginadisiplina ko ang akon kaugalingon para makagraduate ko .*) (**Code K**) and before Student H declared her answer, she kept on smiling and answered the question with a strong conviction, stated, "Our goodness depends on us. If we have self-discipline and if we want to learn" (*nasa atin naman po ang ikagagaling natin, kung may disiplina tayo sa sarili at kung gusto natin matuto*) (**Code K**) For Student B, he answered, "If we want, we can. We just need to focus on our studies and do the right thing for ourselves" (*kung gusto natun, kaya ta man ah. Tadlungon ta ang pag eskwela, kag himuon ang intsakto para sa aton kaugalingon*) (**Code L**). Student L response was, "Let's not mind what others say about us. Even if we are disabled, while we are in school, let us be kind" (*indi ta lang pagsapakan ang ginahambal sang iban . Bisan disabled ta, samtang ara ta sa school, pakabuot lang kag magtuon*) (**Code L**) while Student D answered, "We still have Sir and Ma'am to help us." (*ara man kanday Sir kag Ma'am nga nagabulig sa amon*) (**Code E**).

Sub-themes created based on the responses are:

- Code K = Strong will and self-discipline
- Code L = Focus
- Code E = Supportive teacher

For question 4, they were questioned about their perception of their school and the latter were their replies. Before the researcher proceeded to the question, the interviewer noticed that Student A was comfortable enough and seemed ready to answer the question. She said that "The school is the one that forms us." (*ang eskwelahan ang gaporma sa aton kinabuhi*) (**Code M**) During the interview, Student B was very sure and honest with his answer. He kept on smiling at the interviewer and his perception was, "If I am here in school, I can think properly. Like, I can think of a better future for the family." (*kung ari ko sa school, makapaminsar ko sang intsakto. Ara balang ginapanumdom ko ang manami nga buwas damlag para sa pamilya ko.*) (**Code N**) During the interview, the researcher noticed that Student H felt nervous and shy. There are times that she was distracted by some other things. Student H answered, "It's easy to study because my teachers and classmates are kind." (*tawhay mag eskwela kay kabuot sang classmates kag teachers ko.*) (**Code E**) Student L responded, "It's as if I'm just at home." (*daw ara lang ko sa balay.*) (**Code O**) For student C, she replied, "Sir is my inspiration. It's like he's my father. He tells me to do better." (*Si sir ang akon inspirasyon. Daw sya man ang amay ko. gina hambalan ko ni sir nga mas namion ko pagid kuno*) (**Code P**) while student D answered , "Maam says I am very good, but I still have to improve my grades because I can do it." (**Code N**) (*si mam gahambal man nga ka very good sakon pero improve ko pa gid kuno ang grado ko kay kaya ko man.*)

Sub-themes created based on the responses are:

- Code M = Reformatory
- Code N = Motivates
- Code E = Supportive teacher
- Code O = Second Home

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Code P = Teachers are second parents

For question 5, they were asked if how they see their life in school in general and these are their answers. During the last question, the interviewer observed that Student A looks gloomy and not in a mood to talk but the researcher encouraged her to share his thoughts and feelings. she said that “Feels good. I can hear my name being called on stage”. (*Nami man. Ginatawag na ang ngalan ko sa stage.*) (**Code S**) and for student B with the same code as Student A. He was confident in answering the last question then replied, “Even if it’s hard, we have a future to foresee. Fight.” (*Biskan budlay, may ara man ta ginaforesee nga future. Laban lang ah.*) (**Code R**). For student D, she talks nicely and answered, “School gives good life. Don’t worry. Ma’am and Sir are there.” (*gahatag sang good life ang school, basta indi lang ta magkabalaka. Ara man kaday ma’am kag sir.*) (**Code Q**) while student H answered, “Just positive. Not because we are disabled, we are already trash. We still have our place. We still have used.” (*Positive lang. Indi porke disabled kami, basura na kami. May ara man kaming opisyo. May ara man kaming silbi.*) (**Code S**) Another response was from Student L, he stated, “We may not feel it yet, but the future is good if you go to school. Just be positive.” (*Guro, indi pa lang natun kabatyag subong pero, nami ang buwas kun gaeskwela ta ah. Basta, positive lang ta.*) (**Code R**)

Sub-themes created based on the responses are:

Code Q = Teachers are second Parent  
 Code R = Better Future  
 Code S = Positive Vibe

**Table 1**

*Themes and sub-themes constructed*

Code	Sub Themes	Themes Constructed
A	Lower class	
B	Laughing Stock	Self Esteem
C	Different from others	
D	Nonchalant	
E	Teacher is an ally	Support from teachers
F	Teacher motivates	Motivation for improvement
G	Able though disabled	
H	Strong and able	
I	Achiever	Self – worth
J	Academically competent	
K	Strong will and self-discipline	
L	Focused	Self-discipline
M	Teacher reliant	Support from teachers
N	Reformatory	Motivation for improvement
O	Motivator	
P	Second Home	Support from teachers
Q	Teachers are second Parents	Support from teachers
R	Better Future	Positive outlook in life
S	Positive Vibes	

The responses of the conversation partners were analyzed and coded. The appointed codes for every of the responses were classified into sub-themes that were later reconstructed into major themes as shown within the following presentation. The following sub-themes were generated from the responses of the respondents.

**Lower category** - Differently-abled students manage to understand that they slot in that class due to what the community permits them to feel. Commonly, the term class describes people operating simply crammed positions. These positions usually have very little status or economic compensation and don't need staff to possess a high school education. Lower-class households area unit at the best risk of falling below the poverty level if employment holder suddenly becomes idle.

**Laughing Stock** - Due to their corporal abilities, those students acquired certain emotions where they feel that they are being laughed at.

**Different from others** - Students' approach toward the differently-abled appeared to believe that they don't belong in a community where they lived in.

**Nonchalant** - Notwithstanding the practice, certain students are attempting their fittest to be calmed and not to be bothered concerning the things thrown at them. The teacher that becomes an ally, that motivates, that became the second home and parents, made these students feel cherished and defended. Teachers who understand how to display their kindness for their students manage to have driven and strong-willed students. Able though disabled, strong and able, achiever, and academically competent. These are the positive attributes owned by these differently-abled students that despite their corporal qualities they continue to be contented and grateful.

**A strong will and self-discipline and focused** - By continuing the way they lived, these students manifested themselves to be extra disciplined and concentrated.

**Better future and positive vibes** - Including the aid of the people around them, by admitting their lapses and providing the treatment that they truly deserve, these students began to have a positive vibe and plan for a better future.

From the sub-themes constructed out of the coded responses, 6 major themes emerged and these are Self-esteem; support from teachers; motivation for self-improvement; self-worth; self-discipline, and positive outlook. These are further divided into two categories: the school intervention and coping strategies.

For the school intervention, the themes of support from teachers and motivation for self-improvement were constructed. The theme SUPPORT FROM TEACHERS is Based on the responses of the conversation partners, where they say the teachers intervene for them whenever they feel like their classmates look at them differently. They also feel that they can always rely on teachers as they would on their families. Through their teachers' motivation and acceptance, they developed this sense of belongingness and a positive outlook in life. The school and teachers play an important factor in the development of the students. By respecting and accepting these students, they became the guide and role model at the same time for the students to follow. This theme emerged from the answers which were coded as E, M, P, and Q.

The theme of Motivation for self-improvement was noted from the responses of the conversation partners where they believe that teachers and the school motivate them to improve themselves better. The school is a reformatory that changes their lives for a better future. The students also affirmed that their schools also gave them the feeling that they are safe and build a brighter future. The schools also accept them without any hesitation encourage them to be at their best despite their situation.

On the challenges encountered and the coping strategies that the differently-abled students use, the following themes emerged:

- Development of self-esteem
- Building of self-worth
- Practice self-discipline

Despite their needs, students tend to be positive. Where they transform their vulnerabilities into shielding equipment to handle the wicked society. By being differently-abled, they realize their worth as a human person and developed themselves to be better. Because of being not enough for society, these students enhance themselves by staying strong and disciplined.

#### 4. Conclusion

The respondents will learn like traditional students provided they're exposed to identical treatment. Some challenged people have sensible educational performance. Others surpass in extra-curricular activities. Respondents behave in line with however their fellow students and academics treat them within the school rooms. Some have difficulties brought by the circumstance encompassing their disabilities like addressing faculty facilities. Acknowledging their self-worth and having a positive outlook in life become their major brick mechanisms. The majority of the participants claimed that they're happy being at school as a result of they believe that learning can provide them a far better future. They claim that their academics and therefore the faculty offer them motivation to continue having an honest future. academics liaise for them once they feel deprived or browbeaten by their classmates. Differently-abled students ought to perceive the way to handle their emotions by building a positive purpose for them in terms of their personal growth and feeling. Schools ought to organize a support cluster for these students. By these, confirmatory skills like talking and sharing can be developed. This can change the scholars to feel comfy and free enough to specific their feelings.

Supporting these students to exist in a conventional nation is essential. This enables them to advance humanly since they socialize with their companions hence developing them for their coming days. The differently-abled can receive equal education with their non-disabled counterparts hence sealing the gap between the educational attainment of non-disabled and disabled children. The students are interested in normal learning activities and feel a sense of pride when they accomplish their objectives in the learning process. Also, the 'normal' children get a chance to interact with the differently-abled children and discover how to exist with them, and be considerate when a need arises instead of laughing, mocking, or fearing them. This is vital in overcoming the stain connected with being differently-abled. On the other hand, disabled children learn from 'normal' children.

*Themes developed are Self- Esteem; Self-Concept; Self-Discipline; Motivation for self-reformation, and Positive outlook.*

**Translational Implications:** The study tacit that the differently-abled students shouldn't suffer. Schools, teachers, parents, classmates, and society ought to modify their ways of reading. Despite the negative perceptions that are being thrown at them it's stunning however they price their value as kith and kin. they have a tendency to price their future and despite their physical qualities, they still attempt for educational success. Moreover, most of them believed that education may provide them with higher lives. Raise awareness for the scholars and academics concerning their behavior which will impact the differently-abled students' well-being.

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