

Special needs education and its challenges to San Jose East District High School teachers

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ISSN: 2243-7703
Online ISSN: 2243-7711

OPEN ACCESS

Received: 29 March 2026

Revised: 23 April 2026

Accepted: 25 April 2026

Available Online: 29 April 2026

DOI: 10.5861/ijrse.2026.26705

Abstract

This study aimed to identify the level of challenges encountered by Special Needs Education (SNED) teachers in inclusive classroom settings. The researcher employed an exploratory sequential approach; descriptive problems were analyzed using descriptive statistics in SPSS version 26, and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (WARP-PLS-V7) was used to establish relationships among variables. Stratified random sampling was used to select teacher-respondents from the San Jose East District. Based on the respondents' perceptions, five challenges were encountered: resources and training, communication gap, emotional strain, parental involvement, and classroom management. The results suggested that persistent communication gaps and classroom management challenges underscored the need for consistent, open communication channels among stakeholders, along with strengthened support linkages with local government units (LGUs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to improve programs and services that address the learning needs of students with disabilities. The study revealed a significant relationship between teachers' educational attainment and teaching performance. Likewise, a significant relationship was established between emotional strain experienced by SNED teachers and their teaching performance. These emphasized the importance of pursuing advanced studies to enhance professional competence and highlighted the value of counseling and peer support systems in promoting teachers' emotional resilience, benefiting both teachers' well-being and students' success. The study recommends the focused training programs, strengthening collaborative initiatives and institutional linkages, and the systematic consideration of its proposed action plan.

Keywords: Special Needs Education, teacher performance, challenges in SNED, inclusive education, SNED in secondary level

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1. Introduction

Every child is entitled to the highest standard of care and support that society can provide, underscoring the importance of inclusive education policies and practices that uphold equality and prevent discrimination. In line with this responsibility, children with physical, mental, or visual impairments should receive specialized education and appropriate interventions tailored to their specific conditions (Allam & Martin, 2021). In the Philippine context, Republic Act 11650 (Inclusive Education Act) and DepEd Order No. 44, s. 2021, provide the legal framework for integrating learners with disabilities into mainstream classrooms, promoting access and equity in education (Republic of the Philippines, 2022). The study of Lingayon (2025) affirms that such policies strengthen learner inclusion and equitable access. However, challenges persist, particularly among teachers who are directly responsible for managing diverse learners in the classroom.

According to Espeño et al. (2024), implementation of special needs education in the Philippines is hindered by limited financial support, inadequate teacher training, inflexible curricula, social stigma, and insufficient infrastructure. These constraints translate into classroom-level challenges, where teachers struggle to manage learners' diverse needs due to limited knowledge, time constraints, and insufficient support from parents and educators (Cheng & Toran, 2022). However, Robellos et al. (2024) emphasize that the success of special education programs depends critically on teachers' attitudes, preparedness, and access to professional development.

In the San Jose East District, 86 learners with disabilities require high-quality education and specialized support in mainstream settings. The integration of special-needs learners into regular high school classrooms has become increasingly evident. Despite efforts to integrate these learners, teachers face ongoing challenges, including limited training opportunities, under-equipped SNED classrooms, and a shortage of qualified special education experts. Addressing these gaps is critical because effective inclusive practices benefit all students, regardless of ability. This study, therefore, aims to identify the challenges faced by high school teachers of Special Needs Education in mainstream settings. The findings of this study may provide valuable insights that contribute to enhancing teachers' performance and supporting learner development.

Statement of the Problem - The researcher aimed to identify the challenges encountered by high school teachers of Special Needs Education in the San Jose East District. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions: (1) What are the challenges encountered by the teachers of Special Needs Education? (2) What is the profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, highest educational attainment, field of specialization, length of service, and training or seminars attended? (3) What is the level of challenges experienced by the teachers in terms of resources and training, communication gaps, emotional strain, parental involvement, and classroom management? (4.) What is the level of the teaching performance of Special Needs Education (SNED) high school teachers using the Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form/IPCRF tool? (5) Is there a significant relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents and the level of their teaching performance? (6) Is there a significant relationship between the level of challenges encountered by the teachers and the level of their teaching performance? Finally, (7) What action plan can be proposed to enhance the teaching performance of SNED high school teachers?

Significance of the Study - This study is significant to the following: for SNED teachers, it provides research-based insights into the challenges they encounter in mainstream settings, empowering the value of specialized training and support to meet the diverse needs of learners with disabilities, thereby emphasizing that well-prepared teachers directly contribute to improved classroom management, tailored interventions, and life skills training. For SNED learners, the study serves as a basis for providing individualized instruction, sufficient

resources, and supportive environments that foster both academic achievement and holistic development. For SNED parents, the findings offer guidance on how to support their children at home better and facilitate more effective collaboration with teachers to meet their children's unique needs. Head teachers and master teachers benefit from a clearer understanding of the challenges SNED teachers face, enabling them to promote collaboration, mentoring, and professional development. School administrators can use the study as evidence to inform decision-making, prioritize resource allocation, and design sustainable support systems that enhance both teacher performance and learner outcomes, reinforcing the importance of effective leadership and administrative commitment. Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) may gain insights into the realities faced by SNED teachers, guiding the enhancement of curricula and training programs to integrate inclusive education principles, behavioral management strategies, and socio-emotional support frameworks. The study also informs DepEd Occidental Mindoro in crafting policies that improve teacher competencies, resource allocation, and inclusive learning environments, while enabling the LGU of San Jose to advocate for a more inclusive society that promotes awareness, acceptance, and community support for learners with disabilities. Finally, the study provides future researchers with a comparative reference, encouraging them to expand the scope of study, explore innovative solutions, and strengthen both teacher performance and learner development.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study - The researcher focused on the challenges high school teachers face in supporting Special Needs Education (SNED) learners in mainstream classrooms. Specifically, the study examined challenges related to resources and training, communication gaps, emotional strain, parental involvement, and classroom management. It explored their relationship to teachers' teaching performance, as measured by the Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF). The data for the number of Learners with Disabilities (LWD) officially recorded in the Learner Information System (LIS) and the number of teachers handling SNED learners were obtained from School Year 2025–2026, while the IPCRF ratings of the teacher-respondents were sourced from School Year 2024–2025. The study has certain limitations. Some parents continued to refuse acknowledgment of their child's condition despite clear manifestations, while others were unable to afford the medical consultations required for proper diagnosis. These factors resulted in a limited number of learners being officially registered as LWDs in the LIS. Additionally, the study did not consider the specific classifications or types of disabilities of learners in the participating teachers' classes.

2. Methodology

Research Design - The study employed a mixed-methods approach using an exploratory sequential design. In an exploratory sequential design, the researcher begins by collecting and analyzing qualitative data to explore a phenomenon. The results are then used to guide the quantitative phase, including instrument development and hypothesis formulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A qualitative method was first conducted through a scheduled interview with the respondents to describe the teachers' challenges in handling special-needs learners in mainstream settings. The collected data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed to identify emerging themes capturing the teachers' perspectives and experiences. Meanwhile, the quantitative method includes a survey questionnaire administered to high school teachers in the San Jose East District.

Respondents of the Study - The respondents in the study were public high school teachers serving learners with special needs in the San Jose East District. A stratified random sampling technique was used to guarantee representation across different schools and grade levels. Teachers were grouped into strata, and a random sample was selected from each group. A total of 133 teacher respondents participated in the survey and interview. With a total number of 202 teacher-respondents, the number of participants was computed using Raosoft's sample size Calculation Formula and anchored at a .05 margin of error. The total number of secondary school teachers teaching SNED in the San Jose East District and the sample size. There were 154 from San Jose National High School, 20 from Pedro T. Mendiola Sr. Memorial National High School, and 28 from Bubog National High School. Overall, there were 133 teacher respondents out of a total population of 202. The 30 respondents were included in the reliability testing, while 103 respondents participated in the final administration.

Research Instrument - The researcher-made questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part included the respondent's demographic profile, such as age, sex, highest educational attainment, field of specialization, length of service, and training or seminars attended. The second part assessed the teachers' level of challenge in handling SNED learners, comprising five sub-components, each with six items, while the third part measured the teachers' performance using the IPCRF tool. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure responses, and weighted mean scores were used for interpretation. The teaching performance of the Special Needs Education (SNED) high school teachers was evaluated using the Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF). The IPCRF ratings were interpreted based on an adjectival scale, where a score of 4.500 to 5.000 is considered Outstanding, 3.500 to 4.499 is Very Satisfactory, 2.500 to 3.499 is Satisfactory, 1.500 to 2.499 is Unsatisfactory, and 1.000 to 1.499 is classified as Poor. This scale was used to determine the level of teaching performance of the respondents in relation to the challenges they encounter in implementing special needs education in mainstream classrooms.

The researcher prepared the tool used in the study. Approval and a recommendation were obtained from the Graduate School's panel of experts. A letter requesting permission to conduct this study was sent to the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent. Upon the approval of the request, permission from the school heads of San Jose National High School, Pedro T. Mendiola Sr. Memorial National High School, and Bubog National High School was secured. Each respondent in the study was provided with a consent letter. An orientation was conducted before the data gathering. The interview process lasted two weeks, coinciding with the enrollment period. At the same time, survey questionnaires were collected using both online (Google Forms) and printed formats over three weeks. After accomplishing the survey, the researcher collected the data. All gathered data were tabulated, analyzed, interpreted, and treated with the highest confidentiality.

Table 1
Reliability Analysis Result

Components	Number of Items	Reliability Item	Coefficients
Teacher's Challenges			
Resources and Trainings	6	0.827	High Reliability
Communication Gap	6	0.780	High Reliability
Emotional Strain	6	0.780	High Reliability
Parental Involvement	6	0.937	High Reliability
Classroom Management	6	0.937	Very High Reliability

The result discloses high and very high reliability of the items in the instrument, as evidenced by the large coefficient of 0.937. The questionnaire was then administered to the final set of respondents.

Statistical Treatment of the Data - The qualitative data obtained from interviews with the teacher respondents were analyzed using thematic analysis. Recording, rewriting, tabulation, and coding were employed to extract the themes. The initial and emerging thematic maps were illustrated to identify the final themes. The quantitative data to address the descriptive problems were processed using descriptive statistics in SPSS version 26 and Structural Equation Modeling (WARP-PLS-V7) to establish relationships between variables. Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage were used to describe the profile of the respondents as well as the result of the Individual Performance Review Form IPCRF rating. The weighted mean was used to treat data on the level of challenges encountered by the teachers of special-needs learners. Lastly, the study's findings served as the basis for crafting the action plan.

Ethical Considerations - The researcher obtained approval from the school division superintendent and school principals in the San Jose East District to collect the data. Trust in the teacher-respondents was given, considering their full understanding of the objectives and the research process. The research instrument was clearly explained to ensure accurate and valid results. During the administration of the instrument, the survey questionnaire was personally distributed at a specified time. The confidentiality of the respondents' data was maintained during the collection, analysis, and reporting of findings. All data and results gathered were used exclusively for the study. If the respondents decided to withdraw, they could do so.

3. Results and Discussions

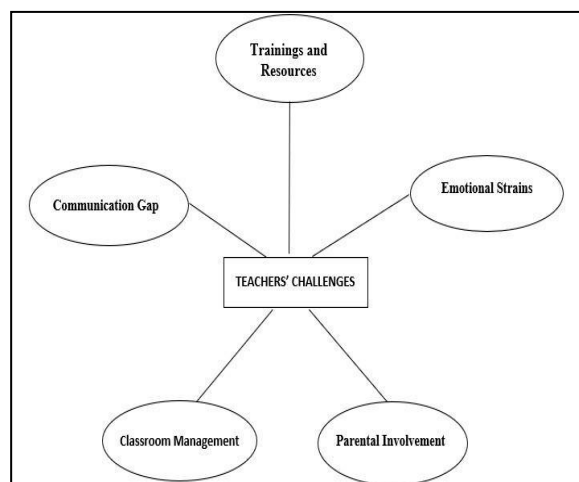
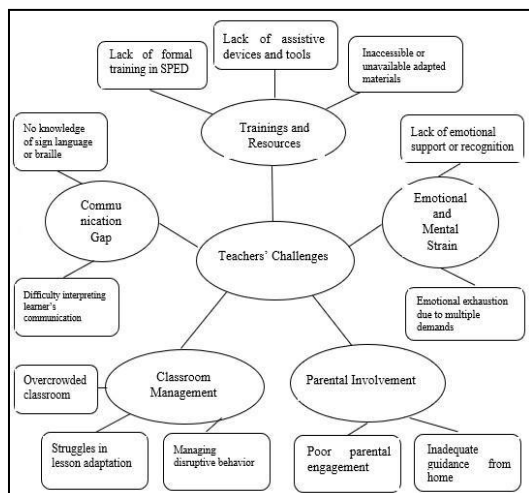


Figure 1. Emerging Themes of Challenges Encountered by the SNED High School Teachers

Figure 2. Final Themes of Challenges encountered by the SNED High School Teachers

Figures 1 and 2 present emerging and final thematic maps of the issues that teachers experience in special needs education. It contains the central theme of the paper, Teachers Challenges, which is connected to five significant thematic clusters: Training and Resources, Communication Gap, Emotional Strain, Parental Involvement, and Classroom Management, each of which has several smaller but interdependent sub-themes. Lack of formal training in SPED, lack of assistive devices and tools and inaccessible or unavailable adapted materials were categorized under trainings and resources; lack of emotional support or recognition and emotional exhaustion due to multiple demands were categorized under emotional and mental strain; poor parental engagement and inadequate guidance from home were categorized under parental involvement; struggles in lesson adaptation and managing disruptive behavior were categorized under classroom management; lastly, no knowledge of sign language and difficulty interpreting learners communication were categorized under communication gaps.

Empirical studies reveal that these sub-themes are perceived as interacting job demands and low job resources: when teachers experience high job demands (complex needs of learners, classroom management, language/communication mismatches) and low job resources (planning time, specialist assistance, adapted resources), they report more burnout, psychological stress, and turnover intentions. That is, the diagram groups the emotional and workload nodes (e.g., “emotional strain,” “teacher stress”). The structural ones (e.g., “absence of SPED experts” and “unavailable adapted materials”) indicate that the job-demands/resources relationships are reported in the literature (Jeon et al., 2022). The data analysis revealed five major challenges faced by high school teachers of Special Needs Education in the San Jose East District. The thematic analysis generated major concerns: Training and Resources, Communication Gap, Emotional Strain, Parental Involvement, and Classroom Management. These clusters reflect the multifaceted difficulties teachers experience in mainstream settings. According to Odeh and Lach (2024), teachers have complained about insufficient preservice training and limited access to special-needs-focused continuing professional development. Correspondingly, structural resource shortages, such as low access to assistive technologies and adapted materials, have been considered a major obstacle to successful teaching in regular classes (Starks & Reich, 2023). It has been found that teachers of learners with special educational needs experience increased job demands and reduced job resources, which, in turn, predict burnout, stress, and intention to leave (Spencer et al., 2022). This falls within the domain of Emotional Strains, as it highlights instructional pressures, behavioral demands, and limited support as sources of emotional burden. The Classroom Management cluster has also been representative of this interplay: the large size of classrooms, the heterogeneity of learners' needs, disruptive behavior, and lack of planning/adaptation time

place an instructional burden on teachers and put teachers' coping capacity in jeopardy. Moreover, parental engagement is essential for supporting learners with special needs. Effective involvement requires emotional and financial support, clear communication between teachers and parents, and institutional backing. This aligns with Koskela and Sinkkonen (2025), who emphasized that successful parental engagement depends on shared responsibility and mutual understanding.

Table 2

Profile distribution of Special needs education teachers in terms of age, sex, highest educational attainment, field of specialization, length of service, and training and seminars attended

Age	Frequency	Percent
21 – 30	19	18.4
31 – 40	37	36.0
41 – 50	28	27.2
51 – 60	17	16.5
61 and above	2	1.9
Sex		
Male	20	19.4
Female	83	80.6
Educational Attainment		
Bachelor’s Degree	27	26.2
With at least 9-36 units of MA	34	33
CARMA	25	24.3
Master’s Degree	12	11.7
MA holder with units in the Doctoral Program	3	2.9
Completed Academic Requirement for Doctorate Program	2	1.9
Field of Specialization		
Special Education	1	1.0
English	20	19.4
Mathematics	15	14.6
Science	15	14.6
Filipino	12	11.7
Araling Panlipunan	15	14.6
Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao	3	2.9
MAPEH	5	4.9
TLE	11	10.7
Others	6	5.8
Length of Service		
	Frequency	Percent
5 and below	28	27.2
6-10	39	37.9
11-15	15	14.6
16-20	9	8.7
21-25	1	1.0
26-30	3	2.9
31 years and above	8	7.8
Trainings and Seminars from 2022 to 2025		
Attended 4 seminars and more	2	1.9
Attended 2 seminars	23	22.3
None	78	75.7
Total	103	100.0

The age distribution shows that the majority of the teachers are 31-40 years old, representing a mid-career group. Jeon et al. (2021) noted that the age composition of the teaching workforce influences job satisfaction and burnout, suggesting that professional development and mentoring programs should be designed to support mid-career teachers while leveraging the expertise of senior practitioners. The high percentage of women in the teaching workforce reflects both national and global trends in which women constitute the majority of classroom teachers. Hwang and Fitzpatrick (2021) state that the overwhelming presence of female teachers in the teaching field is also common in most educational systems and is commonly associated with the gendered values of

teaching as a profession that nurtures and cares. In terms of educational attainment, most teachers have pursued postgraduate education. This indicates that many teachers are enhancing their theoretical knowledge and skills in Special Needs Education (SNED). Research highlights that targeted teacher education and professional development improve attitudes, self-efficacy, and the implementation of inclusive practices (Navarro-Mateu et al., 2020). However, the findings suggest that strategized, SNED-based coursework and workplace mentoring are necessary to ensure the transfer of graduate-level knowledge into classroom impact. The field of specialization shows that English is the predominant specialization at 19.4%, while Special Education is only 1%. This sharp disparity implies that only a small number of teachers specialize in Special Needs Education (SNED), and it has significant implications for inclusive teaching practice. As an example, Sharma and Salend (2016) noted that unclear role definitions and insufficient training in inclusive settings can lead to confusion about responsibilities and challenges in effectively supporting students with disabilities. Regarding length of service, most Special Needs Education (SNED) teachers have 6-10 years (37.9%), followed by 5 years or less (27.2%). The trend indicates that most SNED educators are early- to mid-career, highlighting both the ongoing development of inclusive education and the need for targeted mentoring and professional support to bridge experience gaps in the field. Subarna et al. (2022) found that many teachers lack training in implementing effective inclusive teaching strategies, indicating a need for ongoing professional learning. The study also shows that less experienced teachers may be more open to adapting new instructional practices but often report less confidence when faced with complex needs without adequate training and support. Thus, the high proportion of teachers with moderate tenure underscores the importance of mentorship, workload balance, and continuous professional development to maintain teacher commitment and minimize turnover in the SNED context. Lastly, the distribution of the profile regarding training and seminar attendance shows that most teachers have attended none, at 75.7%, while only 1.9% have attended 4 or more seminars. In the study by Kilag et al. (2024), teachers experienced difficulties delivering specialized services to learners with disabilities due to a lack of fundamental training in curriculum modification and lesson preparation.

Table 3

Level of challenges encountered by the teachers in terms of Resources and Training, Communication Gap, and Emotional Strain

Indicators (Resources and Trainings)	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. I have the opportunity to participate in Special Education SPED training.	2.22	Low
2. The lack of SPED training affects my confidence in teaching special needs learners.	3.12	Moderate
3. I implement an Individualized Education Plan IEP to encourage student participation.	2.75	Moderate
4. I collaborate with fellow teachers to plan appropriate instructional materials for special needs learners.	3.19	Moderate
5. I have access to assistive devices that help support special needs learners. (e.g., text-to-speech software, sign language app, braille note-takers, etc.)	2.20	Low
6. I receive adequate resources from the school to teach special needs learners.	2.14	Low
Composite Mean	2.60	Moderate
Indicators (Communication Gap)		
1. I have the communication skills necessary to help learners with disabilities understand the lessons. (gestures, sign language, braille, etc.)	2.60	Moderate
2. I am confident that LWDs understand lessons through verbal and non-verbal communication.	2.87	Moderate
3. I am willing to improve my communication skills to cater LWDs through trainings and seminars.	4.07	High Level
4. I have to simplify instructions/lessons due to communication barriers.	3.80	High Level
5. I spend extra time preparing materials to address the communication needs of my learners.	3.45	High Level
6. My students with special needs struggle to express their thoughts clearly.	3.61	High Level
Composite Mean	3.40	High Level

Indicators (Emotional Strain)		
1. I experience stress due to the behavioral outburst of a special needs learner.	3.08	Moderate
2. I have experienced burnout symptoms (e.g., exhaustion, detachment, low motivation).	2.87	Moderate
3. I receive support from my school as I manage emotional stress.	2.57	Low
4. I experience emotional exhaustion from the workload related to special needs learners.	2.80	Moderate
5. I feel professionally fulfilled despite the stress in handling a special needs learner.	3.18	Moderate
6. I have access to professional support for managing emotional stress.	2.64	Moderate
Composite Mean	2.86	Moderate

Scale: 4.20-5.00 Very High Level; 3.40-4.19 High Level; 2.60-3.39 Moderate Level; 1.80-2.59 Low Level; 1.00-1.79 Very Low Level

Table 3 shows the mean level of challenges encountered by the teachers in terms of resources and training, communication gaps, and emotional strain. The mean level of teachers' challenges in Special Needs Education in resources and training is 2.60, indicating that teachers are moderately challenged. In the study by Strogilos et al. (2022), it is noteworthy that some teachers cope well with inadequate training by collaborating and learning by doing. However, this mechanism does not replace the need for organized, evidence-based knowledge acquisition. Odeh and Lach (2024) found that teacher dissatisfaction is prevalent, including limited access to professional development training for SNED, unclear facilitation of individualized education plans, and unclear facilitation of differentiated instruction. According to Navarro-Mateu et al. (2020), attitudes and self-efficacy in inclusive education are enhanced when teachers have validated training and support, which is consistent with respondents' reports that insufficient SPED training lowers confidence. Poor material resources will limit implementation, even when teachers are willing to change. In support, Espeño et al. (2024) found that the learning potential of students with special needs is hampered by a lack of customization of instructional materials, even in well-funded schools. All these studies indicate that cooperation is beneficial in the short run, whereas long-term benefits are achieved through regular SPED training and resource allocation.

Moreover, the composite mean of the communication gap (3.40) indicates a high level of challenge among teachers in Special Needs Education (SNED). This proves that even though the teachers are motivated and accommodating, they need institutional reinforcement and specialized training to meet the diverse needs of learners with disabilities and to communicate at a high level. These results closely align with the observations of Andzik et al. (2017), who found that many educators lack sufficient training and time to efficiently implement Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems on a regular basis. The study by Leatherman and Wegner (2022) emphasized that teachers' use of AAC is more effective when they receive assistance through coaching, collaboration, and access to classroom-relevant technologies. These findings suggest that addressing communication issues would be a complex task requiring training, time, and resources to empower educators and foster genuine inclusivity in SNED classrooms.

Furthermore, Table 3 reveals that the composite mean of 2.86 depicts an average strain of emotions in the Special Needs Education SNED teachers. They noted stressful responses due to behavioral outbursts ($M = 3.08$), moderate emotional exhaustion ($M = 2.80$), and low institutional support ($M = 2.57$). These results are similar to the scoping review by Agyapong et al. (2022), which emphasizes that teachers globally face a heightened risk of burnout and depression when the emotional demands of their role are high and institutional support is insufficient. The study highlights that special educators, in particular, are exposed to significant emotional labor due to the complex behavioral and learning needs of their students, placing them at psychological risk if support mechanisms are inadequate. Financial, structural, and workload pressures complicate this. This implies that the medium-but-consistent strain observed in the data can become more severe if left unaddressed. Secondary trauma and compassion fatigue are emerging concerns in special education teaching. Floyd et al. (2024) examined the factors underlying compassion fatigue among special education teachers in rural settings, despite strong resilience, indicating that even experienced, well-intentioned teachers cannot be left to deal with traumatized students and their needs. Combining these studies highlights that the emotional strain of SNED

teachers does not necessarily evaporate with experience or training; a system of support, psychological resources, and workload management is all needed to maintain teacher wellbeing and the quality of instruction.

Table 4

Mean Level of Teachers' Challenges in Special Needs Education in terms of Parental Involvement and Classroom Management

Indicators (Parental Involvement)	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. I receive adequate support from the parents of a special needs learner.	2.89	Moderate
2. I keep parents regularly informed about the learner's progress.	3.41	High
3. I manage fb group chat for parents to ask questions about take-home activities.	3.25	Moderate
4. I provide print materials, books, and online links for take-home use to help students better grasp the lessons.	3.26	Moderate
5. I involve parents in the decision-making process for their child's Individualized Educational Program (IEP)	3.22	Moderate
6. Positive parent-teacher relationships contribute to the success of my special needs learners.	3.66	High
Composite Mean	3.28	Moderate
Indicators (Classroom Management)		
1. I break tasks into smaller, manageable steps for special needs learners.	3.51	High
2. I encourage special needs learners to participate in classroom activities.	3.92	High
3. I clearly explain classroom rules and expectations to all of my students.	4.04	High
4. I am confident in creating inclusive learning environments.	3.62	High
5. I maintain a consistent classroom routine to minimize disruptive behavior.	3.83	High
6. I have a balanced distribution between special needs and general education students.	3.61	High
Composite Mean	3.76	High

Scale: 4.20-5.00 Very High Level; 3.40 -4.19 High Level; 2.60-3.39 Moderate Level; 1.80-2.59 Low Level; 1.00-1.79 Very Low Level

Table 4 presents the mean levels of teachers' challenges in special needs education regarding parental involvement and classroom management. The composite mean of 3.28 in Table 13 indicates a moderate level of challenge with parental involvement in Special Needs Education (SNED). This implies that there are parents who have a direct role in their child's program, i.e., attending meetings and being involved in the development of the Individualized Education Program (IEP), as well as in their child's home. Still, at the other end, some do not participate because of the demands of their job, because they are unaware, or because they feel powerless. Hyassat et al. (2024) found that parents of students with disabilities in Jordan had moderate involvement in special education, highlighting external barriers and role ambiguity as the main limitations. Teachers report relatively strong communication practices—keeping parents informed about progress (M = 3.41) and maintaining digital groups for queries (M = 3.25)—yet feel only moderately supported by parents overall (M = 2.89). This pattern aligns closely with Hornby and Blackwell's (2018) argument that communication alone is insufficient for genuine parental involvement. Their study emphasizes that effective engagement requires mutual understanding, clear roles, and efforts to remove both practical and perceptual barriers to deeper collaboration. The moderate support reported by teachers in the findings suggests that while communication channels exist, they may not yet be fostering the level of shared responsibility and relational trust.

In addition, the results indicate that teachers experience significant challenges in classroom management, with a composite mean of 3.76. Explaining classroom rules and expectations to all children is their highest-rated ability (M = 4.04), promoting inclusivity and order while addressing behavioral, emotional, and attention issues. Effective classroom management in special education requires individualized and adaptive approaches, as teachers often assume multiple roles, including behavior analyst, mediator, and counselor (Almulla et al., 2025). Balancing between consistency and flexibility is critical, as overly strict rules can unintentionally discriminate against learners with disabilities (Voukelatou, 2022). High student-to-teacher ratios and inadequate support staff

present further difficulties (Kumar & Kaushik, 2023). These results are consistent with suggestions for emotionally adaptive disciplining methods, including positive reinforcement, clear expectations, and de-escalation techniques (Oktavianti et al., 2020). Moreover, systemic institutional support, professional coaching, and behavioral intervention training further enhance teachers' classroom management skills (Reinke et al., 2021), suggesting that both structural resources and individual flexibility are necessary for successful inclusive classroom management.

Thus, tables 3 and 4 indicate an overall mean of 3.18, which implies that the degree of challenge is moderate in five main domains, including Resources and Trainings (M = 2.60), Communication Gap (M = 3.40), Emotional Strain (M = 2.86), Parental Involvement (M = 3.28), and Classroom Management (M = 3.76). Challenges in Parental Involvement reflect a lack of active collaboration between special educators and families. In line with Hyassat et al. (2024), who found that the partnership between schools and parents is often insufficient to assist children with disabilities. Communication difficulties are also notable, as teachers navigate complex interactions with learners and families, a finding supported by Gaspar and Sahay (2025), who highlight the inadequacy of traditional parent-school communication models in special education. Although Resources & Training scored lowest, underlying barriers such as limited professional development and access to resources remain important, as noted by Salleh and Rosli (2018). These results underscore that while some challenges are more prominent, effective SNED implementation depends on adequate training, strong communication, and active parental cooperation.

Table 5

Teachers' Performance in Terms of Individual Performance Commitment Review Form Adjectival Rating for School Year 2024–2025

IPCRF Rating	Frequency	Percent
Very Satisfactory	15	14.6
Outstanding	88	85.4
Total	103	100.0

Table 5 presents the teachers' performance based on the Individual Performance Commitment Review Form Adjectival Rating for School Year 2024-2025. As indicated, most Special Needs Education (SNED) teachers (85.4 percent) were rated Outstanding, with the remainder (14.6 percent) Very Satisfactory. This implies that the majority of teachers have high professional competence, efficiency, and even devotion to their work, even when dealing with diverse learners with special needs. These findings strongly echo the insights of Efthymiou et al. (2017), who assert that educators who engage in continuing professional learning in behavior management, inclusive teaching, and assistive technology appear to boost greater confidence and effectiveness in the classroom, thus resulting in an outstanding rating. The remarkably high proportion of outstanding-rated teachers aligns with this perspective, suggesting that the SNED teachers in the present study possess the pedagogical competence and collaborative capacity associated with high performance.

In testing the hypothesis, structural equation modeling (SEM) using the partial least squares (PLS) method was employed. Statistical results were generated using WarpPLS version 7.0 and were all anchored at the 0.05 significance level. The structural model shown in the figure highlights the direct links among the variables. As depicted in Figure 3 of the structural model, teaching performance, measured by IPCRF, is hypothesized to be significantly related to their profile and to the challenges they encounter in teaching students with special needs. The first exogenous variable, profile, is characterized by age (AGE), sex (SEX), educational attainment (EDUC), field of specialization (SPEC), length of service (SERVICE), and training and seminars (TRNGSEM). The second exogenous variable comprises resources and training (RESTRNG), communication gap (COMMGAP), emotional strain (EMOSTR), parental involvement (PARENT), and classroom management (CLSMGT), each with six statement indicators.

Meanwhile, the endogenous variable, teaching performance, is represented by the Individual Performance Commitment Form Adjectival Rating (IPCRF). Also displayed for each path are the correlation coefficients,

rounded to two decimal places, along with p-values anchored at the 0.05 level. The beta coefficients indicate the strength of the connection between the variables as well as their significance. Another set of values is reflected in the coefficient of determination, R^2 , which is 0.18. This represents the percentage of variation in teaching performance that can be explained by variation in the combined respondents' profiles and the challenges they face in handling students with special needs. This suggests that only about 18% of teaching performance can be attributed to the combined effects of teachers' profiles and the challenges they face when teaching special-needs students. A large percentage, 82%, can be attributed to factors not specified in the study.

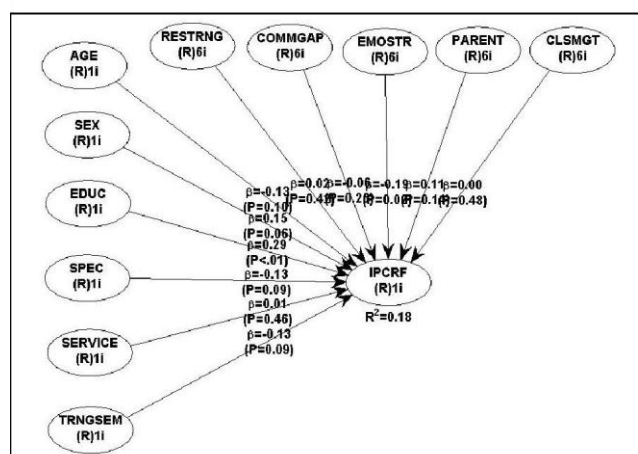


Figure 3. Structural Model for the Relationship Among Respondents' Profile, Encountered Challenges, and Teaching Performance Level

Table 6

Path Coefficients and p-values for H_0

Paths	Beta (β) Coefficient	p-value	Interpretation
H_{01}: PROFILE \rightarrow TEACHING PERFORMANCE (IPCRF)			
AGE \rightarrow IPCRF	-0.126	0.095	Not Significant
SEX \rightarrow IPCRF	0.147	0.062	Not Significant
EDUC \rightarrow IPCRF	0.293	<0.001	Highly Significant
SPEC \rightarrow IPCRF	-0.130	0.088	Not Significant
SERVICE \rightarrow IPCRF	0.010	0.461	Not Significant
TRNGSEM \rightarrow IPCRF	-0.128	0.090	Not Significant
H_{02}: CHALLENGES \rightarrow TEACHING PERFORMANCE (IPCRF)			
RESTRNG \rightarrow IPCRF	0.021	0.416	Not Significant
COMMGAP \rightarrow IPCRF	-0.062	0.261	Not Significant
EMOSTR \rightarrow IPCRF	-0.188	0.024	Significant
PARENT \rightarrow IPCRF	0.106	0.135	Not Significant
CLSMGT \rightarrow IPCRF	0.004	0.483	Not Significant

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

The 6 paths are shown for the connections of the variables. The beta coefficient is low but highly significant in the relationship between educational attainment and IPCRF ($\beta = 0.293$, $p < 0.001$). This strongly suggests that teachers' educational attainment affects their teaching performance. According to Mohacsi (2020), the successful implementation of SNED requires instructors who possess the highest level of education and the most appropriate expertise in their field and who engage in ongoing professional development to address the needs of students with disabilities. Meanwhile, the relationship between emotional strain and IPCRF is inverse ($\beta = -0.188$, $p = 0.024$). Negative beta values denote an inverse relationship between variables. This suggests that

although the teachers' emotional strain is higher, it appears to have a diminishing effect on their teaching performance. It is confirmed by Agyapong et al. (2022) and Ntim et al. (2023) that the emotional labor of special needs teachers is high due to behavioral disturbances, mood swings, and specific instructional requirements. Simultaneously, schools are required to address the emotional burden through organized mental health support, counseling, workload management, and peer mentoring. Integrating mental health interventions with capacity-building initiatives will ensure that teachers are competent and resilient, ultimately leading to higher student learning outcomes and greater overall effectiveness of Special Needs Education programs.

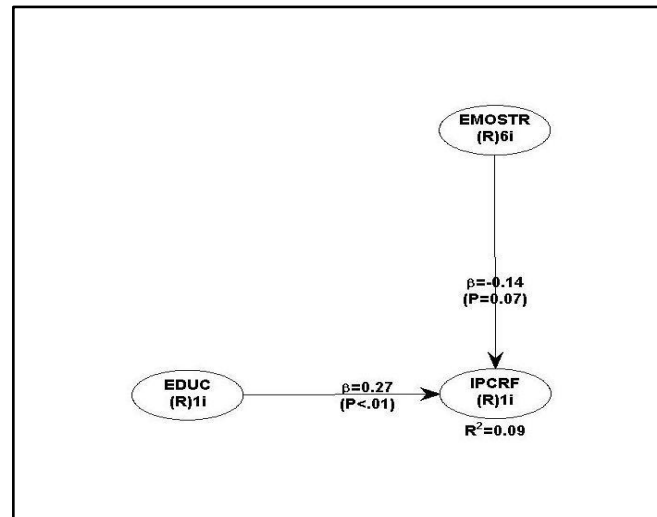


Figure 4. Emerging Model for the Relationship Among Respondents' Profile, Encountered Challenges, and Teaching Performance Level

Having 9 paths that did not show direct links to the endogenous variable, a new model emerges and is displayed in Figure 4. As shown in the model, educational attainment (EDUC) and emotional strain (EMOSTR) had direct paths leading to teaching performance (IPCRF). According to Mohacsi (2020), effective SNED implementation requires teachers who possess both the highest level of education and the most prominent expertise in their field. Learners with disabilities received better attention from teachers who completed special education training and obtained graduate degrees; this was favorably correlated with their performance outcomes. On the contrary, special needs teachers lean towards a high level of emotional stress because they are exposed to demanding and unpredictable situations in their classrooms, such as students with behavior disorders, intellectual disabilities, and emotional imbalances. Agyapong et al. (2022) claimed that although this job-induced emotional drain is not as evident as burnout or physical exhaustion, it can have a major impact on work productivity, thereby affecting teachers' performance.

Table 7

Standardized Estimates of the Path in the Emerging Model

Path	Standardized Estimates	<i>p-values*</i>	Effect Coefficient**	Standard Errors	Effect Size
Ho1: PROFILE → TEACHING PERFORMANCE (IPCRF)					
EDUC→IPCRF	0.272	0.002	0.074	0.092	Small
Ho2: CHALLENGES → TEACHING PERFORMANCE (IPCRF)					
EMOSTR→IPCRF	-0.139	0.073	0.019	0.095	Small

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

**Effect size coefficient: 0.02 – small, 0.15 – medium, 0.30 – large

The effect of the respondents' profile, considering educational attainment, reveals a small standardized

coefficient estimate of 0.272, supported by the small effect coefficient of 0.074. Although the standardized estimates appear low, the strength of the relationship is supported by a p-value of 0.002. Standard error values ranging from 0.092 to 0.095 are small, indicating the accuracy and consistency of the sample estimates in the emerging model. However, the p-value of 0.073 for the association between emotional strain and teaching performance did not fall below the 0.05 significance level, thus indicating no direct effect. The above finding leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis that no significant relationship exists between teachers' profiles in terms of educational attainment and their teaching performance, as reflected in IPCRF. Thus, teachers' educational attainment significantly influences their teaching performance. Furthermore, a significant direct relationship was found between the challenges teachers encounter, specifically emotional strain, and their teaching performance; thus, the second hypothesis is also rejected. This is in line with the findings of Sabaruddin et al. (2020) and Rapp & Corral-Granados (2024), which indicate that special education teachers are more competent in implementing behavioral interventions, using assistive technologies, and modifying instruction to meet individual learning requirements due to their formal training and expertise.

Table 8*Proposed Action Plan to Enhance the Teachers' Performance*

Action Area	Specific Actions	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Expected Outcome	Budget
Resources and Trainings	Conduct workshops on SNED teaching, behavioral interventions, assistive technology, and IEP development	School Administrators, Special Education Coordinators	Quarterly	Teachers gain enhanced knowledge and skills in SNE practices	50,000
	Provide access to specialized teaching materials and assistive technology	School Admin, Local Government Units	Annually	Improved classroom delivery and inclusive learning opportunities	30,000
Communication Gap	Conduct communication enhancement training and sign language basics.	SNED experts, SNED teachers, Division office	Quarterly	Teachers' enhancement of communication needs.	30,000
	Institutionalize mental health break	Division office, School Admin,	Biannually	Reduction in teacher stress and burnout	n/a
Emotional Support	Encourage peer support groups	Teachers, School Heads	Ongoing	Stronger social support and shared practical solutions	n/a
	Involve parents in IEP briefings	Teachers, Parents	quarterly	Understand their child's IEP and how they can contribute to it at home	5,000
Parental Involvement	Facilitate parent networks and support groups.	Teachers, parents, Parent-Teacher Association	quarterly	Sharing experiences and emotional support	5,000

The action plan aims to enhance the teaching performance of SNED High School teachers while simultaneously improving students' learning. It focuses on several strategic areas, such as resources and training, communication gap, emotional support, and parental involvement. Teachers' competence should be enhanced through workshops on inclusive teaching, a focus on flexible communication among stakeholders, and the provision of resources and support. This suggestion aligns with Tantawy (2020), who noted that long-term professional growth equips educators with the skills needed to manage diverse classes effectively. Similarly, Kilag et al. (2024) found that special education teachers were often not trained in the basics of curriculum

change and lesson preparation, highlighting the importance of organized workshops. Emotional labor often manifests in the complex needs of students that special education teachers must meet, potentially resulting in stress, burnout, or even secondary traumatic stress (Agyapong et al., 2022; Attwood, 2024). According to Ntim et al. (2023), the absence of systemic emotional support leads to a decline in teachers' performance over time. Hence, monthly and biannual interventions should be recommended, as they guarantee long-term results that directly affect teaching performance. The involvement of parents can help in understanding students' needs and improving the implementation of an individual education plan (Nisa & Kusmiati, 2019). The creation of flexible communication channels, biannual parent education sessions, along with their consistency, cultural responsiveness, and efficiency despite socio-economic barriers, are important mechanisms for maintaining collaboration in treating children with neurodevelopmental disorders (Penn, 2019; Utami, 2022). Together, these interventions build a SMART-oriented intervention (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) to improve the teaching effectiveness of SNED high school teachers by addressing knowledge gaps, emotional well-being, resource availability, communication barriers, and institutional support.

4. Conclusions

The findings of this study highlight five primary areas of difficulty: training and resources, communication gaps, emotional strain, parental involvement, and classroom management. The majority of educators demonstrate a strong commitment to developing inclusive learning environments by cultivating both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, even as mid-career teachers face heightened responsibilities and stress. Despite the availability of some training, gaps in specialized instruction and limited guidance on managing diverse learner needs continue to hinder optimal teaching performance. Furthermore, communication barriers with parents and administrators, along with the high demands of classroom management and emotional labor, underscore the complexity of the SNED teaching role. Despite these challenges, teaching performance among SNED teachers for School Year 2024–2025 remained generally high, with the majority rated Outstanding or Very Satisfactory in the IPCRF. Significant relationships were found between teachers' educational attainment and performance and between emotional strain and teaching effectiveness, underscoring the importance of advanced education and the impact of classroom stressors on instructional quality. The proposed Action Plan offers a comprehensive approach to increasing teacher capacity, reducing stress, and improving overall teaching outcomes for students with special needs by emphasizing targeted resources, professional development, emotional support systems, and greater parental involvement.

Recommendations - Based on the findings, it is recommended that the Department of Education, through the Schools Division Office, prioritize continuous professional development for SNED teachers. This includes workshops, seminars, and in-service trainings on differentiated instruction techniques, assistive technology integration, behavioral management strategies, and collaboration with parents and specialists. Schools should strengthen the SNED workforce by mentoring programs for younger and mid-career teachers, providing refresher courses for experienced educators, and ensuring equal access to training and career advancement regardless of gender. Teachers whose specialization is outside of special education may also be supported through bridging programs, certifications, or targeted workshops, while encouragement to pursue advanced degrees in Special Education may further enhance instructional competence and professional growth. Schools are encouraged to foster strong collaboration among teachers, parents, and administrators through consistent communication channels, parent-inclusive activities, and digital platforms for learner monitoring. Partnerships with Local Government Units (LGUs) and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) can provide additional resources and programs to support students with disabilities. Teacher well-being should be promoted through wellness activities, access to counseling services, and peer support programs. At the same time, adequate classroom resources and training in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) can enhance classroom management and inclusion. Recognition of exemplary performance through awards, incentives, or promotions may sustain motivation and encourage continued excellence in teaching. Finally, the proposed Action Plan may be fully implemented and regularly monitored to ensure its effectiveness in improving teaching performance and reducing

emotional strain. Future research may explore the coping strategies employed by SNED teachers to inform further policy development, teacher training, and support systems, thereby enhancing both professional well-being and educational outcomes for learners with diverse needs.

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