

# Extent of evidence-based practice utilization by SPED educators in autism spectrum disorder (ASD) of Kidz Gym Learning Center, Talamban: Basis for a school-based enrichment program

Cañares, Glenda C. ✉  
Cebu Technological University, Philippines ([Glendacanares143@gmail.com](mailto:Glendacanares143@gmail.com))

Cabarles, Mae Janine M.

Gairanod, Joanna Clidette G.

Guardiana, Angellit

Pinili, Lilibeth C.

Tenerife- Cañete, Janine Joy

Espina, Raymond C.

Capuno, Reylan G.

Taghoy, Julius

Calasang, Veronica

Mangubat, Randy

Received: 20 June 2026  
Available Online: 7 July 2026

Revised: 3 July 2026  
DOI: 10.5861/ijrse.2026.26301

Accepted: 6 July 2026



ISSN: 2243-7703  
Online ISSN: 2243-7711

OPEN ACCESS

---

## ***Abstract***

This study aimed to assess special education teachers' perceived competence in implementing Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Employing a descriptive-correlational research design, the study explored the extent to which a Special Education school in Cebu City adopted EBPs in teaching students with ASD. Participants comprised Special Education teachers from Kidz Gym Learning Center. Data was collected using an EBP Inventory developed by the National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorder and adapted from Wong et al. (2014). Findings highlighted a high level of familiarity with EBPs such as "Prompting," "Reinforcement," and "Self-management," while awareness of "Discrete Trial Training" and "Pivotal Response Training" was limited. These results underscore the need for targeted professional development to improve proficiency in less-utilized strategies. The findings suggest that collaboration among teachers and administrators may improve EBP utilization and teachers' knowledge. Based on the study's findings, a School-Based Enrichment Program for Applying Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) is recommended to support SPED teachers.

**Keywords:** special education, descriptive-correlational, inclusive education, autism spectrum disorder, action plan

## **Extent of evidence-based practice utilization by SPED educators in autism spectrum disorder (ASD) of Kidz Gym Learning Center, Talamban: Basis for a school-based enrichment program**

### **1. Introduction**

Evidence-based practices (EBPs) are widely recognized as essential for improving educational outcomes in special education, particularly for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). ASD is a complex neurodevelopmental condition characterized by challenges in social communication, behavior, and learning. With the global prevalence of ASD increasing, educators must provide effective interventions that address the diverse needs of these students. Research indicates that EBPs, including applied behavior analysis (ABA), social skills training, and structured teaching methods, are critical for fostering academic and social success in individuals with ASD (Wong et al., 2015).

Internationally, Dynia et al. (2020) identified a persistent gap between the recognition of evidence-based practices (EBPs) for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their implementation by classroom teachers. Furthermore, Alhossein (2021) reported that special education teachers in Saudi Arabia demonstrated a moderate level of knowledge and use of EBPs for students with ASD. Hsiao & Petersen (2019) examine the degree to which evidence-based methods are included in training programs for special education teachers who work with students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. They found that 60% of participants reported exposure to evidence-based practices, but only 40% of the identified practices were comprehensively addressed in training programs.

In the local context, the Kidz Gym Learning Center, an institution providing special education services, plays a critical role in addressing the needs of students with ASD. However, the extent to which Special Education (SPED) educators at this center utilize evidence-based practices remains unclear. Assessing the current application of these practices can identify gaps and inform improvements in educational strategies. Despite the ongoing emphasis on EBPs in autism education, the research-to-practice gap persists (Lukins et al., 2022). Hence, this study assessed the degree to which SPED educators at Kidz Gym Learning Center implement EBPs for ASD and uses these findings to inform the development of a tailored school-based enrichment program. The proposed program aims to enhance educator capacity and improve the overall learning experience for students with ASD. By addressing the gap between research and practice, this study contributes to ongoing efforts to provide effective, high-quality education for students with ASD, ensuring their unique needs are met using the most current, evidence-based methods.

### **2. Methods**

A descriptive-correlational design was employed to examine the extent to which 12 SPED teachers at Kidz Gym Learning Center-Talamban Campus implement evidence-based practices (EBP) in teaching students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The EBP Inventory, developed by the National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorder and adapted from Wong et al. (2014), served as the primary data collection instrument. Data collection commenced following approval from the school administrator. An orientation session was conducted to explain the study's purpose, procedures, and confidentiality measures to participants. Subsequently, participants completed the online survey questionnaires. Instructions and assistance were provided as needed to ensure all respondents had sufficient time to complete the survey. The collected data were tallied, analyzed, and interpreted using appropriate statistical tools.

### 3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the data gathered from SPED teachers' perceived level of competence, familiarity, interest, usage, and perceived skill in implementing evidence-based practices.

**Table 1**

*SPED teachers' perceived level of competence in evidence-based practices components*

Evidence-Based Practices	Level of Familiarity		Level of Interest		Level of Usage		Perceived Skill Level	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1. Prompting	2.83	0.39	2.83	0.39	2.75	0.62	1.75	0.87
2. Reinforcement	2.75	0.45	2.75	0.62	2.58	0.51	1.75	0.62
3. Task analysis	2.33	0.78	2.50	0.8	2.25	0.75	1.58	0.51
4. Time delay	2.42	0.51	2.67	0.49	2.33	0.65	1.58	0.67
5. Computer-assisted instruction	2.25	0.75	2.67	0.49	2.08	0.79	1.50	0.8
6. Discrete trial training (DTT)	1.75	0.62	2.58	0.67	1.67	0.78	0.92	0.79
7. Naturalistic intervention	1.92	0.67	2.75	0.45	2.17	0.83	1.33	0.78
8. Parent-implemented intervention	2.58	0.67	2.83	0.39	2.50	0.52	1.75	0.62
9. Peer-mediated instruction/ intervention	2.25	0.62	2.83	0.39	2.17	0.72	1.67	0.65
10. Picture exchange communication system (PECS)	2.67	0.49	2.83	0.39	2.08	0.67	1.58	0.51
11. Pivotal response training (PRT)	1.92	0.79	2.67	0.65	1.67	0.78	1.00	0.85
12. Functional behavior assessment (FBA)	2.25	0.62	2.67	0.49	2.08	0.51	1.50	0.52
13. Functional communication training (FCT)	2.17	0.58	2.75	0.45	2.17	0.72	1.33	0.78
14. Antecedent- Based Interventions	2.08	0.79	2.58	0.67	2.00	0.74	1.17	0.83
15. Differential reinforcement of other/alternative behavior	2.17	0.58	2.75	0.45	2.42	0.51	1.50	0.67
16. Extinction	2.08	0.79	2.67	0.65	2.00	0.74	1.17	0.58
17. Response interruption/ redirection	2.50	0.8	2.75	0.62	2.42	0.51	1.42	0.79
18. Self-management	2.75	0.45	2.75	0.45	2.42	0.67	1.58	0.51
19. Social narratives	2.50	0.67	2.67	0.65	2.33	0.78	1.42	0.51
20. Social skills training groups	2.67	0.49	2.83	0.39	2.50	0.67	1.50	0.52
21. Structured work systems	2.50	0.8	2.75	0.62	2.33	0.78	1.58	0.51
22. Video modeling	2.58	0.51	2.75	0.45	2.33	0.65	1.58	0.51
23. Visual supports	2.67	0.49	2.83	0.39	2.83	0.39	1.67	0.49
24. VOCA Verbal Output Comm. Aid/SGD (Speech Gener. Device)	2.50	0.52	2.67	0.65	2.17	0.94	1.50	0.67

Table 1 presents Special Education (SPED) teachers' perceived competence in components of evidence-based practices (EBPs), revealing a pronounced discrepancy between psychological readiness and practical capability. Across all 24 evaluated items, teachers consistently report high interest, with mean scores ranging from 2.50 to 2.83. This enthusiasm corresponds with relatively high levels of reported familiarity and classroom use, particularly for core practices such as Prompting (mean of 2.83 for Familiarity, 2.83 for Interest, and 2.75 for Usage) and Visual Supports (mean of 2.83 for Usage). However, a marked decline is observed in the "Perceived Skill Level" column for every EBP. Even for frequently utilized and familiar interventions, mean skill scores remain low, typically between 0.92 and 1.75. For specialized interventions such as Discrete Trial Training (DTT) and Pivotal Response Training (PRT), perceived skill levels are lowest, with means of 0.92 and 1.00, respectively, despite moderate-to-high teacher interest (means of 2.58 and 2.67, respectively).

The findings imply that although SPED teachers demonstrate high motivation and foundational awareness of EBPs, they lack confidence and mastery in implementation. This "interest-skill gap" suggests that teachers may implement critical interventions incorrectly or superficially due to insufficient technical training. Such a systemic deficit undermines the quality of specialized instruction and may impede student progress. Teachers' knowledge of EBPs for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a key predictor of their use of these practices. Professional development programs can enhance both knowledge and implementation, and teachers' use of EBPs for students with ASD could be improved through high-quality professional development (Alhossein, 2021). These results emphasize that exposure or positive attitudes toward EBPs are insufficient for clinical competence. Educational administrators should prioritize intensive, hands-on professional development, targeted coaching, and continuous feedback to translate teacher motivation into instructional mastery.

**Table 2**

*SPED teachers' perceived level of familiarity, interest, usage, and perceived skill in evidence-based practice*

Variable	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Level of Familiarity with the EBP	2.38	0.42	Very familiar
Level of Interest in Implementing EBP	2.72	0.44	Very interested
Level of Usage Frequency of EBP	2.26	0.46	Sometimes
Perceived Skill Level in Implementing EBP	1.47	0.43	Novice

Table 2 synthesizes the SPED teachers' perceived level of familiarity, interest, usage, and perceived skill in evidence-based practice revealing a sharp, systemic disconnect between Special Education (SPED) teachers' attitudes and their actual teaching capacity. On one hand, teachers demonstrate strong psychological buy-in and foundational knowledge, as evidenced by high aggregate scores for being “Very interested” with a mean of 2.72 and “Very familiar” with a mean of 2.38 with Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs). Despite this strong baseline, actual classroom execution lags, with the frequency of implementation dropping to “Sometimes” with a mean of 2.26. The most alarming finding, however, is the collapse in the final metric: despite their familiarity and active interest, teachers overwhelmingly evaluate themselves as a “Novice” with a mean of 1.47 when it comes to their actual skill level in executing these strategies.

The results imply that a critical “rhetoric-versus-reality” gap exists within the special education classroom. Teachers are eager and conceptually aware, but they lack the operational mastery required to implement complex interventions effectively. Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) must be prioritized amid the extensive curriculum and pedagogical expertise available to teachers (Ramirez, 2023). This deficit implies that current teacher training models are failing to bridge the gap between theory and practice, potentially leading to superficial, inconsistent, or incorrect execution of EBPs that could compromise student learning outcomes.

**Table 3**

*Test of relationship among SPED teachers' level of familiarity, interest, usage, and perceived skill in evidence-based practice*

Variables Compared	r-value	Strength of Correlation	p-value	Decision	Significance
Familiarity with EBP & Interest in Implementing EBP	0.79	Strong	0.0022	Reject Ho	Significant
Familiarity with EBP & Usage Frequency of EBP	0.80	Strong	0.0018	Reject Ho	Significant
Familiarity with EBP & Perceived Skill Level in EBP	0.43	Moderate	0.1630	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Interest in Implementing EBP & Usage Frequency of EBP	0.53	Moderate	0.0763	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Interest in Implementing EBP & Perceived Skill Level in EBP	0.42	Moderate	0.1740	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Usage Frequency of EBP & Perceived Skill Level in EBP	0.61	Moderate	0.0352	Reject Ho	Significant

Table 3 presents the statistical relationships among various dimensions of evidence-based practice (EBP) adoption by Special Education (SPED) teachers. The correlational analysis indicates that familiarity is a critical factor for initial engagement, demonstrating a statistically significant and strong positive relationship with both teachers’ interest in implementing EBPs ( $r = 0.79$ ) and the frequency of classroom use ( $r = 0.80$ ). However, a high level of interest does not necessarily result in consistent usage, as this relationship is only moderate and statistically non-significant ( $r = 0.53$ ). Notably, the data show that actual classroom application is the primary determinant of capability, with a significant, moderate-to-strong positive correlation between usage frequency and perceived skill level ( $r = 0.61$ ). In contrast, conceptual variables such as familiarity ( $p = 0.1630$ ) and interest ( $p = 0.1740$ ) do not exhibit statistically significant relationships with teachers’ actual skill levels.

These results suggest that theoretical exposure and positive attitudes alone are insufficient for developing professional competence in special education. Familiarity with an intervention may increase receptivity and willingness to attempt its use, but skill acquisition is fundamentally behavioral and develops through repeated, frequent classroom implementation. Since interest does not ensure frequent usage, administrators should not

depend solely on persuasive or motivational professional development to enhance instructional quality. This finding aligns with Dynia et al. (2020), who reported that nearly all educators utilized at least one evidence-based practice (EBP) for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), with common methods including visual support, behavioral techniques, and social narratives. When SPED teachers possess knowledge of EBPs and are equipped to implement, maintain, and generalize them in the classroom, they are more likely to deliver the curriculum effectively (Ramirez, 2023). Ultimately, these findings indicate that to advance a novice teacher to expert status, school systems must implement interventions that facilitate the transition from knowledge to consistent practice, as classroom application is the only empirically supported pathway to instructional expertise.

#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the results, this study concludes that by examining SPED teachers' familiarity, interest, usage frequency, and perceived skill in implementing EBP, it identified areas that could better support EBP implementation for students with ASD. Addressing prominent challenges and strengthening current teaching practices might have helped encourage more EBP utilization. Notably, there was a statistical relationship between familiarity with EBP and interest in implementing EBP, indicating the importance of awareness and understanding of EBPs in motivating their use. It is also suggested that professional development initiatives aimed at increasing awareness of EBPs could have been an important motivator for teachers to implement these practices in their teaching. Lastly, the relationship between EBP usage frequency and perceived EBP skill indicated that practice was valuable for building competence and confidence. Overall, the research provided insights into SPED teachers' perceived competence in using EBP in the classroom. The findings suggest that collaboration among teachers and administrators may improve EBP utilization and teachers' knowledge. Based on the study's findings, a School-Based Enrichment Program for Applying Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) is recommended to support SPED teachers. The proposed program uses a structured training matrix to address identified gaps in familiarity, interest, usage frequency, and perceived skill level with EBPs. The matrix outlines priority areas of concern, specific objectives, targeted strategies, timelines, and responsible personnel to ensure organized, measurable implementation.

The findings yield several important implications for the following stakeholders:

**For School Administrators:** The results identify strengths and gaps in current EBP application, guiding the development of tailored professional development programs and policies to improve teaching practices. These insights also inform strategic resource allocation and contribute to enhancing overall teaching effectiveness within the school.

**For Special Education Teachers:** The study offers an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their practices and competencies in utilizing EBPs. Understanding the relationship among experience, training, and EBP implementation enables educators to pursue targeted professional development to more effectively address students' needs.

**For Students with ASD:** By identifying areas for improvement in EBP implementation, the research aims to enhance the quality of education and support provided to students with ASD. This approach ensures that learners benefit from evidence-based interventions designed to promote emotional development.

**Novelty and Contribution of the Study -** This study contributes to the field of special education by examining not only SPED teachers' familiarity with evidence-based practices (EBPs) for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), but also their interest, actual usage frequency, and perceived skill level in implementing these practices. While previous studies have emphasized the importance of EBPs in autism education, fewer studies have examined the gap between teachers' awareness of EBPs and their confidence in applying them in everyday classroom practice, particularly within a school-based special education context in the Philippines. The novelty of this study lies in its identification of an "interest-skill gap" among SPED teachers. The findings show that teachers generally reported high familiarity and strong interest in EBPs, yet their perceived skill level remained at the

novice level. This suggests that awareness and willingness alone are insufficient to ensure effective implementation. More importantly, the study found that actual usage frequency was significantly associated with perceived skill, indicating that competence in EBP implementation develops through repeated classroom application, guided practice, and sustained professional support. In this sense, the study responds to a practical literature gap: the need to understand how EBPs are translated from theory into classroom practice in special education settings. By using the findings as the basis for a school-based enrichment program, the study provides a localized and practice-oriented contribution that can support teacher development, improve instructional quality, and strengthen educational support for students with ASD.

**Literature Gap Addressed by the Study** - Although evidence-based practices are widely recognized as essential in supporting students with ASD, the literature continues to report a persistent gap between research knowledge and classroom implementation. Many teachers may be aware of EBPs or may express interest in using them, but they may not have sufficient training, confidence, coaching, or opportunities to apply these strategies effectively in real classroom situations. This study addresses this gap by focusing on the extent to which SPED educators in a specific school setting are familiar with, interested in, using, and skilled in implementing EBPs. Rather than assuming that familiarity leads directly to competence, the study examines the relationship among these dimensions. The findings show that familiarity is significantly related to interest and usage, but not necessarily to perceived skill level. This highlights the need for professional development programs that move beyond awareness-raising and instead emphasize hands-on training, classroom application, coaching, feedback, and sustained teacher support. Thus, the study fills a practical gap in the literature by providing school-level evidence on where teachers need the most support and by proposing a school-based enrichment program that directly responds to the identified needs.

**Practical Educational Implications** - The findings of this study have important implications for special education practice, particularly for teachers, students, and school administrators. For SPED teachers, the results suggest the need to move beyond basic familiarity with EBPs toward deeper instructional competence. Although teachers reported high interest in implementing EBPs, their perceived skill level remained at the novice level. This indicates that professional development should not be limited to lectures or general orientations. Instead, teachers need hands-on workshops, demonstration teaching, peer observation, mentoring, coaching, and feedback-based practice. Such support can help teachers apply EBPs more accurately and confidently in real classroom situations. For students with ASD, improved teacher competence in EBPs can contribute to more structured, consistent, and individualized learning support. When teachers are better trained in strategies such as prompting, reinforcement, visual supports, functional communication training, social skills instruction, and behavior-based interventions, students are more likely to benefit from instruction that addresses their academic, behavioral, social, and communication needs. Strengthening EBP implementation can therefore improve the quality of learning experiences and promote more meaningful participation among students with ASD. For schools, the findings highlight the importance of establishing a systematic and school-based professional development program. School administrators may use the results to identify priority training areas, allocate resources, and design enrichment programs that respond directly to teachers' needs. Since usage frequency was significantly related to perceived skill level, schools should create opportunities for teachers to regularly practice EBPs, receive feedback, and collaborate with colleagues. A school-based enrichment program can help build a shared culture of evidence-based instruction and improve the overall quality of special education services. Overall, the study is significant because it provides practical evidence that teacher interest and familiarity are not enough. To improve special education outcomes, schools must support teachers in transforming knowledge into actual classroom competence. The proposed enrichment program may serve as a practical mechanism for strengthening EBP implementation and improving educational support for students with ASD.

Overall, the significance of the study lies in its practical contribution to special education. By identifying the gap between SPED teachers' interest in EBPs and their perceived skill in implementing them, the study provides evidence that can guide school-based training, teacher mentoring, and instructional improvement. These findings are particularly relevant for education-focused journals because they show how research results can be translated

into concrete professional development actions that benefit teachers, students with ASD, and schools.

**AI Declaration Statement** - The authors acknowledge utilizing the AI language tool (Grammarly) during manuscript preparation for language refinement, structural editing, and drafting select sections. All intellectual content, data collection, analysis, interpretation of results, and conclusions are the sole responsibility of the authors. AI assistance was restricted to improving clarity and readability and did not affect the originality, integrity, or academic responsibility of the research. The authors retain full accountability for the accuracy and validity of all published content.

## 5. References

- Alhossein, A. (2021). Teachers' knowledge and use of Evidenced-Based Practices for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Saudi Arabia. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*, 741409. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.741409>
- Dynia, J. M., Walton, K. M., Brock, M. E., & Tiede, G. (2020). Early childhood special education teachers' use of evidence-based practices with children with autism spectrum disorder. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders, 77*, 101606. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rasd.2020.101606>
- Hsiao, Y., & Petersen, S. S. (2019). Evidence-Based practices provided in teacher education and In-Service training programs for special education teachers of students with autism spectrum disorders. *Teacher Education and Special Education the Journal of the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children, 42*(3), 193–208. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888406418758464>
- Lukins, J. M., Able, H., & Hume, K. (2022). Novice Teachers' Implementation of Evidence-Based Practices in Autism Education: Examining the roles of preparation and perception. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 38*(1), 5–16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10883576221144734>
- Ramirez, H. J. C. (2023). SPED Educators' Extent of Use of Evidence -Based Practice in Teaching Students with ASD. *AIDE Interdisciplinary Research Journal, 3*(1), 109–129. <https://doi.org/10.56648/aide-irj.v3i1.57>
- Wong, C., Odom, S. L., Hume, K. A., Cox, A. W., Fettig, A., Kucharczyk, S., ... & Schultz, T. R. (2015). Evidence-based practices for children, youth, and young adults with autism spectrum disorder: A comprehensive review. *Journal of autism and developmental disorders, 45*(7), 1951-1966. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-014-2351-z>
- Wong, C., Odom, S. L., Hume, K. Cox, A. W., Fettig, A., Kucharczyk, S., ... Schultz, T. R. (2014). Evidence-based practices for children, youth, and young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, Autism Evidence-Based Practice Review Group*. Retrieved from <https://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014-EBP-Report.pdf>

