

Exploring the Real-Life Issues and Challenges in an Inclusive Classroom through the Lens of General Education Kindergarten Teachers and Parents: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

This qualitative-phenomenological study determined the experiences of general education (Gen Ed) kindergarten teachers in a SpEd school in Davao del Norte handling inclusive classes. The purpose of this study was to explore and understand the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers' experiences and perspectives, particularly on the issues and challenges of handling diverse learners in an inclusive classroom. This research was extracted through various theories namely, Self-Efficacy, Behaviorism, Cognitivism, and Constructivism in inclusive education (IE) practices. The participants of the study were four (4) Gen Ed kindergarten teachers and three (3) parents of kindergarteners who participated in the in-depth interview (IDI) and focus group discussion (FGD). They were selected through a purposive sampling technique, and data gathered were analyzed through thematic analysis. The trustworthiness of this study was strictly employed. The issues that emerged in the problem namely: inadequate understanding of IE teachers and parents (diversity of learners), the difficulty of referral to special education (SpEd) specialists because of in-denial parents, class size, lack of training of teachers, and limited instructional materials. To address the issues and challenges they shared ways: seek support from SpEd teachers, employ reinforcement and reward system, differentiated instruction, and maximize learning materials. They also pointed out insights they could share with others: inclusion develops socio-emotional skills of diverse young learners, inclusion increases teachers' competence and inclusion builds strong relations among Gen Ed kindergarten teachers, SpEd teachers, and parents. Based on the results, they implied that the Department of Education (DepEd), school administrators, Gen Ed kindergarten teachers, SpEd teachers and parents should have a sincere commitment to the implementation and continuous improvement of IE, particularly in the kindergarten level for these diverse young learners succeed in an inclusive classroom.

Keywords: inclusive education, special education, general education kindergarten teacher, kindergarten, special education teacher, learners with disabilities, diverse young learners, parents, qualitative-phenomenological

1. Introduction

Intensified advocacy of IE program has come across in providing quality kindergarten program for diverse young learners. The kindergarten hands the critical foundation of these young individuals to perform effectively in later years. Their participation in inclusion in kindergarten program promotes the significance of rich natural setting opportunities for quality education with the interventions from Gen Ed kindergarten teachers. Hence, a high quality of kindergarten programs established a high-quality inclusive programs from which all types of learners can benefit.

In Hongkong, a recent study on the lived experiences of a mainstream primary teacher in an inclusive classroom reported that some teachers complain about not knowing how to handle an inclusive class but they are all teachers who have received inclusive training. In addition, teachers believe they have used many strategies and measures to help learners with disabilities (LWDs), but their parents are not satisfied with the teachers' work. Apparently, there is a gap between what teachers have done and what other stakeholders perceive teachers have done (Kwok, 2021).

The DepEd urges the transition programs for LDWs from resource rooms to Gen Ed classrooms, particularly in kindergarten education, is crucial for Gen Ed kindergarten teachers to inhibit the skills to cater the diverse young learners in inclusive class to promote the DepEd Order No. 021 series of 2020, which is the policy guidelines on the adaptation of the K to 12 transition curriculum framework for LDWs. However, the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers are struggling with the existing issues they face in an inclusive setting, excluding their recent concerns about the new policy guidelines.

In Meycauayan City, Philippines, a research conducted by Dela Cruz (2020) unveiled the different challenges faced by regular teachers such as the lack of training or seminar in handling children with disabilities, lack of administrative support; lack of teamwork among regular teachers and special education teachers; and increased in workload. Despite they find inclusion program to be very hard and challenging it still creates a positive effect with which regular teachers adapts to change and improve or professionally develops themselves and they believe that they are responsible for ensuring that adequate learning environments are established for children with disabilities as well as the typically developing peers who are in inclusive setting.

Likewise, a SpEd school in Davao del Norte has been implementing the inclusion program from kindergarten to grade 6, with trained Gen Ed teachers for mainstreaming of LWDs from self-contained classes to Gen Ed classes. The mentioned program is currently guided by the DepEd Order No. 44 series of 2021 which is the Policy Guidelines on the Provision of the Educational Programs and Services for LWDs in K to 12 Basic Education which clearly states that all Gen Ed teachers will handle LWDs. These trained Gen Ed teachers who are still struggling to handle an inclusive class from their pool of experience, what about those untrained teachers?

The aforementioned experiences, triggered my interest to conduct this study which focused on the lived experiences, issues and challenges, and perceptions of Gen Ed kindergarten teachers handling inclusive classes. I have read several studies

that dealt with this topic but, I have not come across a study that is qualitative phenomenological research. Also, there were many studies conducted related to this topic but mostly the results obtained are limited to its effectiveness.

Further, the findings of this research are significant to the diverse young learners, and educational stakeholders and may provide rich insights to Gen Ed kindergarten teachers, educational administrators, and educational researchers regarding the lived experiences and issues and challenges of Gen Ed kindergarten teachers handling inclusive classes.

1.1. Review of Related Literature

Inclusion in the kindergarten education program (KEP) opens the avenues to augment the quality basic education in the field. However, issues on providing quality KEP and inclusion is the primary struggle of the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers' lived experiences inside the inclusive classroom. According to the Early Childhood Research Institute on Inclusion [(ECRII), 2015] parents of children without disabilities participating in inclusive programs report positive changes in their children's confidence, self-esteem, and understanding of diversity. On the contrary, Bailey (2014) argues that some people believe that kindergarteners without disabilities tend to reject the kindergarteners with disabilities in an inclusive classroom. There is concern that some may be bullied which may cause unneeded emotional pain. Trinquand (2009) affirms that peer acceptance and friendship provide a wide range of learning development opportunities for children.

In Bahamas, 90% of the public primary school teachers have negative opinions about IE and how it was being implemented. Large class numbers, poor infrastructure, inadequate teacher training, and a lack of resources and support were all significant factors that contributed to these unfavorable opinions. However, a number of teachers suggested that addressing these unfavorable influencing variables would provide more favorable opinions of the IE approach (Hunter et al., 2014).

Likewise, Nesyna and Starovoit (2014) stated that Russian teachers able to accept IE as children with special needs get opportunity of both interaction with children's community and socialization however the researchers emphasizes that the realization of IE causes anxiety and fears, associated with complexity of pedagogical activity, children interaction (risk of aggressive behavior), necessity of special conditions and equipment. Many preschool teachers lack professional and educational experience in dealing with LWDs. In addition, a lack of psychological and professional support for IE was shown. The achievement of successful participation requires additional professional training and the development of pedagogical and psychological support for preschool teachers. Therefore, psychological support is the most important thing for preschool teachers in the inclusive process.

Moreover, a fact that LWDs were mingled with diverse learners in Gen Ed classes, exclusive education has a lot of problems (O'Leary, 2019). Some private schools were found to be adopting inclusion, although it was unclear if they were doing so effectively and efficiently (Muega, 2019). Teachers would need to "exert extra efforts" because IE techniques entail numerous paperwork-related tasks (Gravelle, 2013 and Muega, 2019).

Consequently, Dubkovetska, et. al. (2016) elaborated that the success of the implementation of IE depends on the following factors: sufficient funding for schools, the improvement of the legal framework and legal framework, the development of teaching and the main methods of inclusive education, and the training of teachers to use get education included in their teaching practice. Educational training includes the development of individual training plans and programs for LWDs, the use of effective social and educational methods of communication with various professionals and parents of students with special needs, incorporate flexible teaching methods and standardized testing into inclusive systems; establishing support for teachers and parents of students who need education including; prevent unfair treatment and prejudice to children with special needs by their peers and their teachers, create moral and psychological comfort in the classroom and values of humanity, compassion and cooperation.

Early studies found other important elements for success in inclusive settings include assessment-driven intervention (Greenwood, Carta & McConnell, 2010), parent involvement and support (Sainato & Morrison, 2001), and teacher preparedness (Snyder, Hemmeter & McLaughlin, 2011). The real challenge of designing successful inclusive programs becomes one of accomplishing social immersion while achieving academic progress for all children in the classroom (Crosland & Dunlap, 2012; Odom, Buysee, & Soukakou, 2011; Strain & Bovey, 2011) as mentioned in the study of Mamontayao (2017).

In the United States, according to a study by Hughes and Valle-Riestra (2007), the most common teaching methods used by kindergarten teachers to accommodate learner diversity are: a.) Arranging room layouts to ensure accessibility; b.) Establishing appropriate routines for students; c.) Teaching students with disabilities to use positive social behaviors; implement transformational programs; e.) encourage all students to respect and involve LWDs;) plan activities to enable LWDs to succeed. However, there are some practices least or never implemented such revising the curricula to build on learners' prior knowledge, monthly basis communication with the SpEd teachers and teachers who had an identified LWDs in their classroom had never had any type direct communication with the SpEd teacher. In addition, the unpreparedness of teachers to teach LWDs the size of Gen Ed classrooms, and insufficient time to teach and adapt materials are cited as common barriers.

On the other hand, the lack of resources and infrastructure was noted as one of the obstacles to IE, the preparedness of teachers and school administrators, and teachers in Gen Ed lack training in IE. To solve these issues, present teachers should be given the appropriate training and a budget large enough to support the project (Muega, 2019). Many public schools in the Philippines are still underequipped, whether they are in urban centers or outlying locations (Muega, 2016). This could be one of the factors undermining the confidence of many Gen Ed instructors in the country to work in inclusive classrooms. Muega (2016) reported that despite teachers' and parents' claims of knowledge with IE; they continued to raise reservations about their understanding and application of IE.

Meanwhile, teachers were found to have some positive attitudes toward inclusion, but insufficient awareness of inclusive methods, according to Alhassan (2014). This was demonstrated by the sparse application of instructional modifications to address individual needs. The implementation of inclusion by teachers was found to be influenced by teachers' attitudes, knowledge of special needs education, and experience working with LWDs.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and understand the lived experiences Gen Ed kindergarten teachers particularly on handling diverse learners in an inclusive classroom. It focused on challenges, insights, and perceptions

about experiences of the four (4) teachers and three (3) parents in one of the SpEd Centers in Davao del Norte Division in implementing the inclusion program for mainstream learners specifically in kindergarten level.

At this stage in the research, IE was generally defined as a program implemented in the school system including kindergarten classrooms to provide all students with the most appropriate learning environments and opportunities for them to best achieve their potential. This program was imposed by the DepEd and implemented by kindergarten teachers. It also aims to provide appropriate accommodations and curriculum modifications for the LWDs, relevant trainings for the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers, accessible knowledge about IE for the parents and stakeholders and for school administrators and DepEd authorities to support, monitor and evaluate the program for its sustainability and continuous improvement.

1.3. Research Objectives

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. To explore the lived experiences, issues, and challenges of Gen Ed kindergarten teachers in an inclusive setting.
2. To identify the coping mechanism on the issues and challenges of Gen Ed kindergarten teachers.
3. To gain insights from the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers, parents in inclusive education practices.

1.4. Theoretical Lens

The concept and idea of this study was obtained from Albert Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1997). It referred to the confidence of a person's ability to carry out behaviors required to produce specific achievements in results. Self-efficacy represented confidence and ability to control one's own motivation, actions, and social environment (Forsyth & Carey, 2009).

This work was related to educative model IE, which LWDs were placed in the regular classroom setting to learn the age-appropriate curriculum in the same classroom environment as their nondisabled peers. This principle emphasized that all learners with learning disabilities can be taught in a regular classroom to the fullest scope as possible, and they were only excluded in regular classroom setting if the support services cannot be given (Greene, 2017).

In addition, this model backed the present study as the education system has followed inclusive learning wherein learners with learning disabilities and special needs were mainstreamed in regular classes in all public schools. With that situation, the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers were mandated to cater diverse learners and make interventions and able to give proper learning opportunities to them.

More so, another concept that supported it is Tomlinson's Model of Differentiation Instruction which advocated for responsive teaching that attends to students' variance in readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Teachers understand, know, and observe the similarities, differences, strengths, and weaknesses of the learner and use information and results to plan instruction (Robb, 2020).

On the other hand, this study is also anchored based on B.F. Skinner Behaviorism Theory (1930). It regarded as the earliest and one of the classic theories of learning (Nalliah & Idris, 2014). To sum up, the key behaviorism principles that underpin education are that behavior is learned, behavior is governed by the environment in which it occurs, teaching cannot occur without learning, learning equates to changing behavior, behavior is governed by what comes after actions, and there needs to be a focus on the observable (Harold & Corcoran, 2013).

Well-known instructional strategies like explicit or direct instruction are examples of IE techniques based on behaviorism (AlShammari, 2019A; Steele, 2005). Positive research findings with LWDs in Gen Ed classrooms have been obtained using this technique (Al-Shammari, Al-Sharoufi, & Yawkey, 2008). Practices based on explicit or direct instruction are systematic; they involve a teacher providing learners with a step-by-step procedure to follow while receiving education (Zhang et al., 2016).

Additionally, in inclusive classrooms, explicit or direct instruction-based approaches that break down tasks into their smallest components are frequently employed to teach LWDs (Steele, 2005). Behaviorists evaluate learners as they learn in order to decide when to start teaching them and which reinforces would work best. The teacher's job during this process is to: (1) choose signals that will elicit the learners' desired reactions; (2) plan practice sessions where prompts are coupled with the intended stimulus which are anticipated to elicit the responses in a "natural" situation; and (3) create the necessary environmental circumstances so that students can appropriately respond to the target stimuli while they are present and be rewarded for their actions (Ertmer & Newby, 2013).

Thus, it is believed that the behavioral theory is connected to a number of the top IE strategies. The main method of teaching behaviorism in a teacher-centered context is direct instruction, in which the teacher plans and conducts classes in accordance with the goals of the pupils.

Another backbone of this study is the theory of cognitivism of Jean Piaget (1950). It basically concentrates on a person's thinking, memory, self-reflection, and motivation to learn. According to Piaget, "the capacity for learning and the manner in which learning occurs alter at each developmental stage" (Evgeniou & Loizou, 2012, p. 666). Different instructional strategies centered on learning activities are used to implement Cognitivism-based inclusive education practices, including note-taking (Boyle & Rivera, 2012), underlining (Swanson, Orosco, & Lussier, 2014), summarizing (Wittrock & Alesandrini, 1990), writing to learn, outlining and mapping, and application of the PQ4R method (Slavin, 2009). In Gen Ed classrooms, the application of these instructional strategies has produced favorable outcomes for kids with special needs. Using cognitivism as a foundation, other techniques study skills, concept mapping, and reciprocal teaching are just a few of the evidence-based metacognitive tactics that are used in inclusive classrooms with LWDs (Al Shammari, 2019B; Hornby, 2014).

On the other hand, this study was gleaned on Zone of Proximal Development which was developed by Soviet psychologist and social constructivist Lev Vygotsky. This concept referred to the gap of the performance of the learners on what they can do with and without help, guidance, and encouragement from more knowledgeable persons (McLeod, 2019).

In this theory, since the teachers could identify the level of learning capabilities of learners through assessment, they would make interventions. Through that, they could give appropriate assistance and learning activities to the learners according to their level until they can perform independently and master the skills. Also, by conducting remedial classes wherein teachers have individualized instruction to teach and give support to their needs until they were able to perform the task and skill independently.

This study was also supported on DepEd Order No. 44, s. 2021 in which it aimed that all Gen Ed teachers in public schools must accept or receive LWDs who are qualified for mainstreaming program. Hence, this study was aligned to the IE program specifically under the mentioned DepEd Order. The teachers' attitude towards it could affect the effectiveness of the program. If the Gen Ed

kindergarten teachers developed self-efficacy towards handling diverse learners, they likely motivated and confident to use and implement their practices for IE. For doing so, they could help the diverse learners in developing their learning abilities by providing differentiated instructions, scaffolding, and appropriate learning opportunities.

2. Methodology

This part shows the methodology used in this qualitative study. The methods and procedures utilized in the conduct of the study were presented in this section. These include research design, research participants, ethical consideration, role of the researcher, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness of the study, and ethical consideration.

2.1. Research Design

This study was qualitative in form. The researcher employed qualitative research in which according to Creswell (2014), this research design was primarily used to describe, explore and understand the common lived experiences of individuals toward a phenomenon or social issue. In addition, this approach involved interviews and focus group discussions in collecting data and analysis. It is used to collect and analyze generated insights from individuals or people about the research questions (Hameed, 2020). Thus, qualitative research was particularly dealt with interpretation and convenes non-numerical data in understanding the situation of persons and the social environment (Adedoyin, 2020).

This inquiry used qualitative research approach for it aimed to explore and understand the experiences of Gen Ed kindergarten teachers particularly on the issues and challenges in handling learners in an inclusive class. Further, this study gathered non-numerical data through interviews and group discussion. This was participated by 7 participants from Davao Del Norte wherein one (1) Gen Ed kindergarten teachers for IDI, another three (3) Gen Ed kindergarten teachers for FGD and three (3) parents for FGD. The gathered data and responses from the participants about their standpoints, challenges, experiences, and strategies toward the problem in handling learners in an inclusive setting.

Moreover, Creswell (2013) defined phenomenology as an approach to qualitative study that concentrates on the commonality of a lived experience within a specific group. The basic aim of the method is to arrive at a definition of the essence of the phenomenon. It was being supported by Waters (2017) who stated that phenomenological research is a study that attempts to understand peoples' perspective and understanding of a particular situation or phenomenon. Furthermore, this kind of research design allowed the participants to express their personal insights, experiences, opinions, and subjectivity towards the phenomenon during interview. Also, it will give importance to the participants' perceptions and interpretation. Hence, a phenomenological research design was useful for knowing in-depth problems and for discovering the hidden concerns and voices of the persons involved (Pathak, 2017).

In this study, a phenomenological design was employed to understand and describe the standpoints of the actual experiences of the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers from Davao Del Norte Division in handling learners in inclusive classroom. Hence, it was the appropriate method to gather the information and experiences of the participants regarding the inclusion in kindergarten classroom. It aimed to gather direct information from the participants about their experiences through IDI and FGD. The questions asked during the data gathering were based on research questions which were about the experiences, issues and challenges, and strategies of the participants toward the problem.

2.2. Research Participants

Creswell (2013) advised that a phenomenological study conducted with a heterogeneous group should have a minimum of 3 to a maximum of 9 individuals. In this study, there are 7 participants from a SpEd school in Davao del Norte Division. Out of 7 individuals, one (1) Gen Ed kindergarten teachers for the IDI, three (3) Gen Ed kindergarten teachers and three (3) parents of diverse kindergarteners for FGD whom experiences in the issues and challenges of inclusive class. The researcher discussed with them the objectives as well as the methodology of this study for them to be guided in answering the interview guide question.

The participants were chosen through purposive sampling. Creswell and Tashakkori (2007) defined purposive sampling as selecting participants who meet certain criteria or experiencing the phenomenon based on the study. The researcher selected the participants who are individuals from a SpEd school in Davao del Norte Division. Participants are chosen by the researcher and asked for a voluntary participation.

The participants were informed through personal contact with the interviewer. Likewise, they were informed of the said interview (Boyce & Neale, 2012), the time and place of the interview (Lochmiller & Lester, 2016), and the time that the participants suggested from their own convenience (Hancock, 2013)

2.3. Data Analysis

The results of the gathered data were the bases for the conclusions, the implication for practice and recommendations for further research. Creswell (2013) developed four steps in data analysis.

Analysis of the data initially began after the collection period. The data collected was reviewed, synthesized, and transcribed to keep careful and detailed notes. The analysis began after the formal data collection period was completed. The qualitative data was analyzed and scrutinized collectively to provide a holistic picture.

The study employed thematic analysis in analyzing the collected and gathered data. It is a method of analyzing and reporting the pattern of themes with the data. It involves focusing on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data which is the theme. Mack et al. (2005) added that thematic analysis is considered as the most commonly used method of analysis in qualitative research. More so, it is very helpful because it is flexible and it is a useful research tool that granted a substantial, complex, and rich account of the data.

The data from the result of the interview from the participants were transcribed. Core ideas were formulated as well as major themes that emerged from the three main questions and probing questions that asked to the participants. The entire transcripts and the transcription reference were used as bases in formulating, deriving on the core ideas as well as major themes and grouping them with other similar themes that have been emerged out from the experiences, issues and challenges and coping mechanisms of public Gen Ed kindergarten teachers under this study.

The vernacular responses were translated. The translated data was encoded and analyzed for proper coding of the essential themes and thematic statement. Drawing conclusion and verification is the last step of analyzing the data. It is essential to review and revisit the data many times to double check and verify the existing conclusions. The conclusions were generated

from the descriptive themes that came out from the interview of the participants, these were woven together to make it a useful material for results and discussions.

2.4. Trustworthiness of the Study

In qualitative research, trustworthiness had become an important concept because it allowed researcher to describe the virtues of qualitative terms outside of the parameter that were typically applied in quantitative research. It is easy for qualitative research to be questioned or discredited due to the amount of bias as the researcher worked to analyze the data.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) as mentioned by Pandey and Patnaik (2014) discussed that trustworthiness of a research study was important to evaluating its worth. Trustworthiness involved establishing credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. According to Andrew K. Shenton's framework on the "Strategies for Ensuring Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research Projects", the four components should be considered by qualitative researchers in pursuit of a trustworthy study. By addressing similar issues, the components or constructs corresponded to the criteria employed by the positivist investigator (Shenton, 2004).

2.4.1. Credibility is defined as the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002) as described by Anney (2014). It involves in establishing that the results are believable. It deals with the question on how congruent are the findings with reality. It refers to the confidence in the truth of the findings. Lincoln & Guba (1985) as cited by Shenton (2005) argued that ensuring credibility is one of most important factors in establishing trustworthiness. They proposed series of techniques that can be used for establishing credibility. These techniques are prolonged engagement, triangulation, iterative questioning, and member checking.

Prolonged Engagement as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) between the researcher and the participants would help gain an adequate understanding of an organization and establish trust between them. This helps the researcher to gain an insight into the context of the study, which minimizes the distortions of information that might arise due to the presence of the researcher in the field.

In this study, I spent adequate time and build rapport with the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers and the parents. I set the time and day prior to the said interview and extended more time in the setting or field of the interview to gain the trust of the participants and provide a greater understanding of their culture and context.

Triangulation, as suggested, may involve the use of many methods. In this study, I employed individual interviews, which form the major data collection strategies for qualitative research and correlates to the field notes from direct observations of participants to the answers of in-depth interview and documents. While individual interviews suffer from some common methodological shortcomings since both are interviews of a kind, their distinct characteristics also result in individual strengths (Brewer & Hunter, 1989).

In this study, I have 1 participant who is a Gen Ed kindergarten teacher for IDI. Persistent observation before and during the IDI was done. The gathered data was triangulated to support the main method of this study. I made sure that the participant's answers from the IDI correlated with the FGD of the other Gen Ed kindergarten teachers and parents.

To further address credibility, iterative questioning was also used in this study as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) that in order to elicit detailed data, iterative questioning is important in which the researcher returned to matters previously raised by the participants and extracted related data through rephrased questions.

Iterative questioning was used in this study in order to elicit detailed data. I returned to matters previously raised by the participants who are Gen Ed kindergarten teachers and the parents who shared their experiences about the study and extracted related data through rephrased questions.

Furthermore, member checking also was done as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985). It is the single most important provision that could be made to bolster a study's credibility. Checks relating to the accuracy of the data may take place "on the spot" in the course, and at the end, of the data collection dialogues.

In this work, the participants were asked to read the transcripts of the dialogues in which they participated. Here, the emphasis should be on whether the participants considered that their words match what they actually intended since the video recording is converted to audio file as requested by them. The articulations themselves should at least have been accurately captured. This allowed them to clarify what their intentions were, correct errors, and provide additional information if necessary. This also confirmed the truthfulness of the summary that these are all their experiences (Streubert & Carpenter, 1995).

Furthermore, in order to ensure credibility, participants will be allowed to set, verify, evaluate, disapprove or check the transcripts, records and the summary of results. I applied different techniques to ensure that the participants honestly gave the information needed for the study. To achieve it, I developed a good rapport with the teacher participants so that accurate information was gathered. These methods were suggested by Shenton (2004) saying that these methods are useful to saturate data.

2.4.2. Transferability as stated by Lincoln and Guba (1985) cited by Pandey and Patnaik (2014) refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings (Trochim, 2006). Bassey (1981) proposes that, if researchers believe their situations to be similar to that described in the study, they may relate the findings to their own positions. This was supported by Lincoln and Guba (1989) and Firestone (1993) as cited by Pandey and Patnaik (2014) who suggest that it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that sufficient contextual information about the fieldwork sites is provided to enable the reader to make such a transfer.

Thus, Guba (1999) suggested having the provision of background data to establish the context of the study and a detailed description of the phenomenon in question to allow comparisons to be made. A detailed description of the method and phenomenon can be an important provision for promoting credibility as it helps to convey the actual situations that have been conducted and, to an extent, the contexts that surround them. Without this insight, it is difficult for the reader of the final account to determine the extent to which the overall findings "ring true" (Shenton, 2005).

In order to attain transferability, I had a detailed and thick description of the methodology and the phenomenon studied and assured that the data were on file to make this study more credible and transferrable.

2.4.3. Dependability is important to trustworthiness because it establishes the research study's findings as consistent and repeatable (Patton, 2005). Lincoln and Guba (1995) stressed the close ties between credibility and dependability, arguing

that, in practice, a demonstration of the former goes some distance in ensuring the latter. This may be achieved by “overlapping methods” such as the focus group and individual interview.

To ensure dependability in my study, I used “overlapping methods” such as FGD and IDI during the conduct of this study. The video recording converted to an audio file was used to assess my study especially in retrieving information out from the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers and the parents. The dependability issue would be addressed more directly if the processes within the study should be reported in a detailed account, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the result work if not necessarily to gain the same result. The result design was viewed as a prototype model. It was supported by Siegle (2006) who explained dependability must provide its audience with evidence that if it were replicated with the same or similar participants in the same context, its findings would be repeated.

2.4.4. Confirmability refers to a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the participants and not researcher’s bias, motivation, or interest (Guba, 1985) pointed out by Anney (2014). To ensure the issue of confirmability, Anney (2014) suggested the following provisions made by researchers: triangulation to reduce effect of investigator bias, admission of researcher’s beliefs and assumptions, in-depth methodological description to allow integrity of research results to be scrutinized, and the creation of audit trail.

Moreover, detailed methodological description enables the reader to determine how far the data and constructs emerging from it may be accepted. Critical to this process is the “audit trail”, which allows any observer to trace the course of the research step-by-step via the decisions made and procedures described as suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1995). An audit trail is a transparent description of the research steps taken from the start of a research project to the development and reporting of findings.

In this study, I kept all the records regarding what had been done in the conduct of the study so other personnel such as the research panel and adviser be able to check and see if the interpretations and conclusions can be traced to legitimate sources.

To further address the issues of dependability and confirmability, I relied on an independent audit of my research methods by a competent adviser (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My adviser is Dr. Wenefredo E. Cagape, an expert in this field with his wisdom and experience in qualitative research. Everything in my qualitative research was viewed, checked, assessed, and evaluated by my adviser thoroughly including all the data analysis and the tools and documents that I used.

All concrete measures in the trustworthiness were addressed in order to value the transparency of the conduct of the study and integrity of the findings.

2.5. Ethical Consideration

In having an ethical consideration in research studies, Belmont Report (1979), as cited by Podgurski (2016) summarized three basic principles involving human subjects. First, respect for persons; individuals should be treated as autonomous agents. It also emphasized that the investigator should ensure that the subject has received a full disclosure of the nature of the study, the risks, benefits and alternatives, with an extended opportunity to ask questions.

Belmont Report (1979) acclaimed that it is necessary to maximize possible benefits and minimize possible harms, and that the investigator should give forethought to the maximization of benefits and the reduction of risk that might occur from the research. And lastly justice, fairness in distribution should be considered and also the equitable selection of participants.

The first principle, respect for persons, asserts that research participants should be treated as autonomous individuals—that means they are independent, self-governing, capable of making decisions for themselves as long as they are given sufficient information to make those decisions. This principle forms the basis of informed consent (Creswell, 2007).

In this study, I provided written consent letter to Gen Ed kindergarten teacher participants and parents and explained to them the full information about the research, both risks and benefits, and allowed them making the decision for them as they participate. As part of the consent, I included the participant’s right to withdraw from the study, the focus of the study and methods to be employed, statements surrounding confidentiality, the right to check and modify the transcripts, and a signature of both the researcher and the participant. I asked permission from the participant to record all necessary information during the conduct of the study.

Furthermore, I ensured that my research participants participated voluntarily or without coercion. Second, the principle of beneficence refers to making efforts to secure the well-being of research participants, or to maximize the possible benefits of the research and minimize the possible harm. The key to this principle is, since all research has both risks and benefits. To make sure they balance. Benefits to research might develop friendship with the researcher or other participants, knowledge or education obtained from participation or opportunity to do well for society or receive the esteem of others (Creswell, 2007). In this study, I used coding for IDI and FGD to ensure the confidentiality of the responses and the identity of my research participants. In addition, I ensured that the outcome of the research was positive and beneficial to my research participants.

Through this study, the Gen Ed kindergarten teacher and the parents participants were benefited in the sense that their voices could be heard especially those who experienced difficulty on handling an inclusive class. I made necessary arrangements in order to not disrupt the regular flow of the classes. Moreover, participants did not spend any amount during the interview. Sensible tokens were given to them as a sign of recognition to their efforts on the study.

To secure justice, I made sure that the participants who were the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers and parents knew the results regarding this study. All the findings and results were disseminated to the participants after all the data analyzed. I also ensured to protect the rights of the participants and accommodated them properly.

To ensure the personal preferences of the participants, I ensured that the true identities of the participants were hidden. They were assigned with an alias and rest assured that the information that they shared would not be identifiable to ensure confidentiality and privacy. The data gathered and findings of the study were kept in strict confidentiality by the researcher, put into written and checked by the participants. Data were retained until the completion of the study and the final defense.

In addition, according to Bryman and Bell (2007), research participants should not be subjected to harm in any possible way. To address this, informed consent were given to the participants to ensure that they only participate voluntarily and not forced. The use of offensive, discriminatory, or other unacceptable language were strictly avoided in the formulation of

questionnaire or interview guide questions.

Furthermore, ample level of confidentiality of the research data should be ensured. To address this, I assigned code names to all the participants to secure the privacy and anonymity. Acknowledgements of works of other authors in the study were properly observed and recognized.

The researcher used APA format for referencing system in giving merit for the work of authors cited in the study. Any treachery about the aims and objectives of the research, was avoided; maintenance of the highest level of objectivity in discussions, and analysis during the research were observed. Any type of ambiguous information as well as representation of primary findings in a biased way was avoided.

Moreover, Bryman and Bell (2007) cites the RA 10173 or the Data Privacy Act 2012 which states that, the state shall protect the fundamental human right of privacy, of communication while ensuring free flow of information to promote innovation and growth. The state recognizes the vital role of information and communication technology in nation-building and its inherent obligation to ensure that personal information in information and communication system in the government and in the private sector are secured and protected.

To address concerns in Data Privacy Act of 2012, the researcher informed the participants on the purpose of the research, which perception or data were collected, how the data were stored and used, and who could have only accessed the data. I secured privacy and anonymity to all the participants by assigning code names. I hoped that through this study, we were able to shed light and answers to questions pertaining to the issues and challenges on the real-life experiences of the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers in inclusive classrooms.

All concrete measures in the ethical considerations of this study were addressed to safeguard respect for persons, beneficence, and justice.

3. Results

This chapter presents the results of the study about the real-life issues and challenges in an inclusive classroom of general education kindergarten teachers and parents, their coping mechanism as well as their insights on handling an inclusive class which emerged from the information gleaned through in-depth interview and focus group discussions. The researcher analyzed thoroughly the data and extracted the core ideas. The core ideas were identified from the transcription and themes which were constructed afterward.

3.1. Issues and Challenges of General Education Kindergarten Teachers on Handling an Inclusive Classroom

After analyzing the voices of the participants about the issues and challenges on handling an inclusive class, five (5) major themes emerged: (1) inadequate understanding of IE teachers and parents (diversity of learners); (2) difficulty of referral to special education specialist because of in denial parents; (3) class size; (4) lack of training of teachers; (5) limited instructional materials.

3.1.1 Inadequate Understanding of Inclusive Education Teachers and Parents (Diversity of Learners)

Understanding of IE is very important for the success of school practices and instruction in teaching diverse learners. For the participants, lack of knowledge and understanding of IE has been one of the issues and challenges in an inclusive classroom particularly to the untrained Gen Ed kindergarten teachers and parents who have limited access to the inclusive classroom.

This concept is linked to the responses mostly from the parents and FGD_P01 who expressed her experiences:

“Ma’am, wala ko kabalo unsay inclusive. Wala baya mi kabalo Ma’am kay dili man mi kasulod, naa ra mi sa gawas sa gate kay bawal man.”

(Ma’am, I do not know what is inclusive. We do not know Ma’am because we cannot stay inside the school, we stay outside the gate because we are not allowed to enter.)

In line with this, FGD_P02 states that,

“Wala jud koy idea Ma’am kung unsay inclusive education Ma’am. Unsa di ay na Ma’am? Dili man gud mi kasulod sa room Ma’am bawal man gud,”

(I do not know what is inclusive education Ma’am. What is that Ma’am? We are not allowed to enter the room Ma’am, it’s restricted.)

It is supported by FGD_P03 said,

“Ma’am wala ko kabalo unsay inclusive education. Pero didtoa tudluan sila kay naa man sila didto.”

(Ma’am I do not know what inclusive education is. But they will be taught there because they’re in there.)

On the other hand, most Gen Ed kindergarten teacher participants have difficulty expressing their practices on IE based on their responses. FGD_T03 stated that,

“Para sa akola i-accept ang tanan klase na bata. Accept ang challenge sa pagtudlo kay no choice. Ang mga regular na bata sige lang pamantay sa

mainstream learners, pag mantatrum ang mainstream.”

(For me, all types of learners are accepted. Accept the challenge in teaching since there's no choice. The regular learner always observes the mainstreamed learners if the mainstreams are having tantrums.)

Likewise, FGD_T01 and IDI_T01 shared the same experiences,

“Para sa akong ang inclusive education kay catering and teaching all kinds of learners. Ang mga challenges naku kay behavioral difficult to handle... Challenging jud ang inclusive class unya kay mag-adjust ko ug ang mga bata pud. Labaw na kung out-of-control ang behavior sa mga bata,” (FGD_T01)

(For me, inclusive education caters and teaches all kinds of learners. And the challenges for me are the behaviors that are difficult to handle. Inclusive class is very challenging then I will also adjust as well as the learners. Especially when the children's behavior gets out-of-control.)

“Inclusive classroom (inclusive education) willing and ready to cater children not only regular children but also children with special needs. Ang uban magtantrums, ang uban kung motindog mi, molingkod siya, kung molingkod mi motindog siya.. naa jud sariling mundo ” (IDI_T01)

(Inclusive classroom (inclusive education) willing and ready to cater children not only regular children but also children with special needs. Some are having tantrums, others if we stand up, he sits down, if we sit down he stands up.. he really has his own world.)

Lastly, FGD_T02 acclaimed that,

“Para sa akong ang inclusive education kay give all strategies in learning situation. Ang mga regular na bata mag sige og bantay sa mainstream, sige og sumbong sa lihok.. ang uban concern sila, ilang tabangan. Sa klase ma interrupt kanang kung ang behavior motukar kay ang mga bata manan-aw man,”

(For me, inclusive education gives all strategies in every learning situation. Regular students always take heed on mainstreams, and complain about their every move. Others are concerned, they help. The class will be interrupted if the disruptive behavior emerges because the other children will watch.)

3.1.2. Difficulty of Referral to Special Education Specialist Because of Denial Parents

Referral is an act of referring someone or something for consultation, review, or further action, directing a patient to a medical specialist by a primary care physician or a person whose case has been referred to a specialist doctor or a professional body.

The participants included difficulty of referral as one of the themes of their experiences since conducting referrals to SpEd teachers within denial parents whose children have manifestations of developmental delays or learning difficulties is hard for the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers.

In line with this, FGD_T01 shared that,

“Akong gi-engnan ang akong parent na irefer naku siya sa imuha (SpEd Teacher) ang iyang anak, dili nalang daw niya paeskwelahon kaysa ma-ingnan na special iyang anak. Ang among tumong ba, maassess ang bata, matabangan kaysa magbalik-balik ang bata. Lahi ra man jud dili kapuyo, sige og panghilabot pero kabalo man ang bata.”

(I told my parent that I will refer her child to you (SpEd Teacher) she said she will no longer send her child to school in the thought that she doesn't want her child to be called “special”. We just wanted her child to be assessed and to seek help instead of no improvement at all. He's very unlikely, restless behavior, he gets random things of his classmates, but he knows the lesson.)

Moreover, FGD_T02 added that,

“Kung naa mi mabantayan na naay learning difficulties na dili kaya sa among powers i-adto namo sa SpEd teacher for assessment para matagaan

og insakto na pagtagad ug malessen among badlungon”... need pud namo ipasabot sa ginikanan labaw na tong new enrollee sa kinder tapos nay behavioral ug learning difficulties mao ang lisod labaw na og denial ang parents.

(If we observed a learner who has a learning difficulty that we can no longer handle, we will refer it to the SpEd teacher for assessment so that proper observation and recommendations will be given and to lessen the number of naughty students. We also need our parent to be aware of this, especially the new enrollees of kindergarten who is showing behavioral and learning difficulties. It is very difficult especially if the parents are in denial.)

In addition, FGD_T03 expressed that,

“Sa akola ang challenge diri sa kinder kay naay mga bata na maobserbahan na dili siya pwede masagol sa kadaghanan, wala ma-assess, na kinahanglan estoryahon ang ginikanan para maadto sa imuha (SpEd teacher). *Ang lisod kay kana walay idea ang parents na naay problem (developmental needs) ang bata, unsaon pagpasabot kay indenial ang ginikanan.* Din irefer namo kay Jolly (SpEd teacher) para maassess, ug mabutang sa self-contained makuhaan mig bata.”

(For me, the challenge here in kindergarten is.. there are children who are not developmentally prepared in the regular class, are unassessed, and we need to speak to the parents that the child needs to be referred to you (SpEd Teacher). It is more difficult if the parents have no idea about their child’s condition (developmental needs) we struggle to inform them because they are in denial. Then, we refer them to Jolly (SpEd Teacher) for assessment, for proper placement if they’re classified as self-contained, they will be transferred out.

3.1.3. Class Size

The participants stressed the class size as one of the challenges on their experiences because the school has implemented the DepEd Order 34 s. 2022 following the maximum computation of 35 learners per session in kindergarten which is really a struggle for Gen Ed kindergarten teachers at this time of full face-to-face implementation.

In line with this, FGD_T02 shared that,

“*Tungod sa bag-o na DepEd Order, nakuhaan mig usa ka kauban tapos ang iyang mga bata gitagi-tagit sa amo so nanaghan among mga bata.* Back to zero nasad kay lahi-lahi naya ning mga bataa ni.”

(Because of the new DepEd Order, we lost one co-teacher and her pupils were given to us as a result of the increased numbers of our learners. We went back to zero since every child was different.)

It is supported by FGD_T03 stated that,

“Problem pud bata ang kadaghanan sa mong bata *labaw na karon maximize 35 learners.*”

(Another problem is the number of learners. As of now, we have a maximum of 35 learners per session.)

Moreover, FGD_T01 added that,

“No, not enough knowledge on handling children with some behavioral issues ug *tungod pud sa class size, medyo lisod i-manage basta daghan og bata.*”

(No, not enough knowledge on handling children with some behavioral issues, and also because of the class size, it is more difficult to manage a higher number of pupils.)

In addition, FGD_P03 expressed that,

“Unsaon nalang pagtudlo anang 30 kapin kita gani maglisod sa usa.”

(How do we teach 30-plus pupils when we even have difficulty in teaching just one pupil.)

3.1.4. Lack of Training of Teachers

Ensuring that all teachers are equipped to instruct all pupils is a crucial component of inclusive education. Without

teachers who are empowered change agents and who possess the principles, skills, and attitudes necessary for every learner to flourish, inclusion cannot be achieved.

The lack of training for teachers becomes one of the issues and challenges in implementing inclusive education as stressed by the participants. There is no other option left for the participants but to manage the kindergarteners inside the classroom as this is part of their duty.

In line with this, IDI_T01 stated that,

“Uu, nangita kog tabang sa imuha (SpEd Teacher) mga advices, trainings mga giexplain nimu sa amoa, pareha sa giengon nimu unsaon pagtudlo sa bata pagsulat...”

(Yes, I am seeking help from you (SpEd Teacher) on advices, trainings, and those you’ve explained to us like on how to teach these children in writing.)

Moreover, FGD_T01 added that,

“Sa pag-accept sa challenge no choice kay part of doing our duties. No, not enough knowledge on handling children with some behavioral issues.”

(In accepting the challenge, we have no choice since it is a part of doing our duties. No, not have enough knowledge on handling children with some behavioral issues.)

Likewise, who is a trained Gen Ed kindergarten teacher FGD_T02 shared that,

“naka attend kog training pero dili d.i enough once makahandle naka sa ilaha diri (inclusive class), . Ang mga regular na bata mag sige og bantay sa mainstream, sige og sumbong sa lihok.. ang uban concern sila, ilang tabangan”

(I attended trainings however it is not enough once you’ve handled (inclusive class). The regular kindergarteners always keep an eye on mainstreams, and always complain about their every movement while others are concerned, and offer help.)

On the other hand, FGD_T03 pointed that,

“Maski walay training ang teachers (kami) nagapaningkamot pud mi na matabangan ang mga bata kay naa naman sa amoa tapos mangayo nalang me og more help kang Jolly (SpEd teacher).”

(Even if we don’t have trainings, we still try our best to help the learners because they are in our classrooms. Then we just ask for more help or assistance from Jolly (SpEd Teacher).

3.1.5. Limited Instructional Materials

Instructional materials are essential tools in learning every subject in inclusive education. For some learners, they prefer a “hands-on” approach to help them understand lessons. Manipulative can support this process by allowing students to demonstrate their knowledge, develop new levels of understanding and explore deeper concepts. Lacking of these materials may hinder learning especially in an inclusive classroom that deals with diverse learners.

The participants included the limited instructional materials as one of the themes of their issues and challenges since learners and classrooms are not provided with sufficient materials that are essential in IE. Although there are materials provided by the DepEd, the participants stated that it will not be enough for the number of pupils they are handling.

In line with this, FGD_T03 stated that,

“Yes naa mi materials same lang kog ginagamit sa ilaha tanan like counters, storybook, blocks para dali makakat-on sa counting, motor skills. Ang mga materials pud na gihatag sa amoa sa DepEd kay kulang pud kung ipagaway na mag-inaaway.”

(Yes, we do have materials and I used it for them like counters, storybooks, and blocks so they can easily learn counting and motor skills. The materials provided by DepEd are limited as a result they are fighting for them.)

In addition, IDI_T01 explained that,

“Oo, naa koy manipulatives, toys, manipulative learning materials mao akong gipanggamit, dili man jud ma-apod-apod ang tanan, naa pud ubang bata mag-ibog-ibog. Mahadlok sad mi mawalaan or maguba ang giissue sa

DepEd.”

(Yes, I have manipulatives like toys and manipulative learning materials and I used them however they cannot be distributed to all of them, there are also learners that are jealous. We teachers are also afraid that the materials issued to us by DepEd will be damaged or lost.)

More so, FGD_T01 shared that,

“Yes, naa mi materials sama sa counters, storybooks, blocks na makatabang sa ilang like developing their motor skills na kasagaran ginabuhat namo sa circle time. *Kaso, dili enough ang materials na giprovide sa amoa kung pwede for your eyes only kay kung mawalaan mangitaon man.*”

(Yes, we do have materials such as counters, storybooks, and blocks that will help them develop their motor skills. We usually use it during circle time. However, the materials provided are not enough and if possible will just be for display purposes (for our eyes only) because if lost, the school will look for it.)

Also, FGD_T02 expressed that,

“Yes, naa mi materials like storybook, counters, blocks of time para mdevelop ang gross motor skills, cognitive skills, fine motor skills. Pero kulang lage ang materials na gihatag sa amoa.”

(Yes, we do have materials such as counters, storybooks, blocks of time that will help them develop their motor skills, cognitive skills and fine motor skills. However, the problem really is the insufficient supply of materials.)

The verbatim statements above were lifted from the verbatim transcripts of the individual IDI and FGDs administered. Those were the answers of the participants in relation to the themes which emerged from the experiences of the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers on the issues and challenges of handling an inclusive classroom.

3.2. Coping Mechanism of General Education Kindergarten Teachers on Handling Diverse Learners

This portion focused on the way of coping mechanism of the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers who experienced issues and challenges on handling an inclusive classroom. The participants conveyed their responses on how they faced the issues and challenges they encountered. As I examined the participants’ responses, four (4) major themes were manifested: (1) seek support from SpEd teachers; (2) employ reinforcement and reward system; (3) differentiated instruction; and (4) maximize learning materials.

3.2.1. Seek Support from Special Education Teachers

Special Education (SpEd) Teacher refers to an individual who teaches academic and life skills to basic education learners who have a range of disabilities and learning difficulties using various strategies targeting the learners’ holistic development. Thus, a SpEd teacher supports in partnership with a Gen Ed kindergarten teacher in planning teaching and providing assistance to LWDs.

This concept is linked to the responses mostly from the parents and IDI_T01 who expressed her experiences:

“*Uu, nangita kog tabang sa imuha (SpEd Teacher) mga advices, trainings mga giexplain nimu sa amoa, pareha sa giengon nimu unsaon pagtudlo sa bata pagsulat... Yes, of course and effective kay si Empie (regular kindergartener) pa lang daan kay ibasi nimu karon wow gisend naku sa lola. It really helps a lot 100% atleast the next time i will encounter problems like that kabalo naku unsaon pagaddress.*

(Yes, I seek help from you (SpEd Teacher) for advices, trainings that you explained to us, like you said, on how to teach a child to write. Yes, of course, and it is effective with Empie (kindergarten learner) if you based his current performance, wow I sent it to the grandmother. It really helps a lot 100%, at least the next time I will encounter problems like that I would know how to address them.)

In line with this, FGD_T01 stated that,

“*Yes, naga ask me og assistance sa imuha (special education teacher) para sa new ideas and techniques....Ako, need jud namo og tabang sa inyo (sped teachers) kay dili naman ni malikayan ug iaccept na challenge na kailangan pa og more knowledge unsaon paghandle ing ani na klase ug kooperasyon pud sa mga tao sa palibot ug kinahanglan naa kay dakong pagsabot unsaon*

pag cater sa diverse learners.”

(Yes, we ask assistance from you, (special education teacher) for new ideas and techniques. For me, we need help from people like you (SpEd Teachers) because we can't deny that we still need to gain more knowledge in handling this kind of class. Cooperation from people around is needed to cater these diverse learners.)

It is supported by a trained participant FGD_T02 said that,

“Aside sa magseek help sa sped teachers, naka attend kog training pero dili d.i enough once makahandle naka sa ilaha diri (inclusive class).”

(Aside from seeking help from SpEd teachers, I have attended some training but it's not enough once you handle them.)

Likewise, an untrained participant FGD_T03 shared same experience,

“Maski walay training ang teachers (kami) nagapaningkamot pud mi na matabangan ang mga bata kay naa naman sa amoa tapos mangayo nalang me og more help kang Jolly (SpEd teacher).”

(Even though we don't have trainings, we still try our best to help these kids because they were assigned to us and we just ask help from Ma'am Jolly (SpEd teacher).

It also affirmed by a parent participant FGD_P01 stated that,

“Yes moadto si teacher (SpEd teacher) sa room, mag-estorya sila ni teacher (Gen Ed kindergarten teacher) ug mag observe siya sa klase kay ginafollow-up niya ang mainstream.”

(Yes, the SpEd teacher comes to the room, and they talk with the Gen Ed kindergarten teacher, and she observes the class to follow up the mainstream learners.)

3.2.2. Employ Reinforcements and Rewards System

One tool that teachers use to help foster academic achievement and self-esteem in LWDs is positive or negative reinforcement and reward system. It was evident in the statement of the participants that positive reinforcement is being applied in an inclusive classroom like giving of stars, clapping, and praises. Participants stated that it helps in managing the classroom behavior of the learners.

Based on the participants' responses one of the coping mechanisms of the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers is to employ reinforcements and reward systems.

In line with this, IDI_T01 shared that,

“Halimbawa kung naay bata na badlungon imuha lang silang imotivate nga ang magpabadlong dili tagaan og candy, pero not all the time imung reward system nimu is through ana kay mahutdan tag kwarta. Tagaan og star ang magbehave nya og murag exhausted na ang mga bata tagaan og time na mag nap, let them watch television they can watch educational shows, mga kwentong pangbata, ana lang lang kay mga bata lang man sila. Mao na to akong mga techniques na gipanggamit kay bawal man ta mangasaba sa ilaha, the more nimu sila kasab-an nimu sila the more pud na mogara.”

(For instance, if there's a misbehaved learner, you just need to motivate him by saying, if you misbehave you will not receive a candy. But not all the time you will do this reward system because you will run out of money. You can give a star to those behaved pupils, and if you think they are exhausted you will give them a nap time, let them watch television where they can watch educational shows, and children's stories, that's all because they are still young. Those are the techniques that I used because we are not allowed to denounce them, because the more you denounce them, the more they will misbehave.)

Moreover, FGD_T01 and FGD_T02 shared same experiences,

“Sometimes, we have a well-managed room. Akong ginabuhay kay maghatag og reward like giving of stars.” FGD_T01

(Sometimes we have a well-managed room. What I did is to give a reward

like giving of stars.)

“Sometimes it can be managed (classroom), sometimes dili, so hatagan og reward kung magbehave ang bata, effective siya. But if dili siya effective find another ways or strategy like clapping, giving stars.” FGD_T02

(Sometimes it can be managed (classroom), but sometimes not, so we should give a reward if the child behaves, it is effective. For instance, it is not working, then we should find another way or strategy like clapping or giving stars.)

In addition, FGD_T03 expressed that,

“Para mamana ang klase naa ko reinforcement like dili ka recess kung magpabadlong. Magkuhag, reward kung maayo ang gibuhat like stars, clapping and praises.”

(So that the class will be managed, I’m using a reinforcement like they cannot take their recess if they misbehave. You could have an award if you will do good like stars clapping and praises.)

The mentioned practices are also confirmed by the parent participants, FGD_P01 mentioned that,

“Ginacheck ni teacher ang trabaho tas naa siyay star ug smiley face.”

(The teacher checked the work and it has a star and smiley face.)

Also, FGD_P02 affirmed that,

“Makita naku sa iyang output na gahatag si teacher og stars kung makahuman sa trabaho.”

(I could see it in her output that the teacher gave some stars if the work is done.)

3.2.3. Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction involves responding effectively to the differences that exist among learners in the classroom. Several studies asserted that teachers differentiate when they interact with a single learner or a small group of learners by altering their teaching strategies in an effort to produce the optimum learning environment.

Since kindergarten pupils show different learning styles, the participants also use differentiated instruction to manage the regular ones at the same time LWDs to make them feel sense of belongingness. Based on their responses, they adopt sitting arrangements, games, and group activities.

In line with this, IDI_T01 shared that,

“Tanang learning styles akong giadopt, sitting arrangement... So, ipampered sila, ipacify buhat kag strategies na malessen ang kasamok o kagubot sa classroom, Giving activities like games, through games, let the CSNs feel that they are.. they belong ipafeel nimu sa ilaha na they belong dili ipafeel na lahi sila kung dili part sila. Yes, very effective, kay atleast inig sulod niya sa klase magduhaduha na madiscriminate, na ginaembrace siya sa iyang classmates..

(I have adopted all learning styles and sitting arrangements. I pampered them, pacify, and make strategies to lessen the disruption in the classroom. Giving activities like games, through games CSN’s feel that they belong. I let them feel that they are not different, but they part of our class. Yes, it is very effective because when they come to class, they have no doubt to be discriminated and they are embraced by their classmates.)

It is supported by FGD_T01 stated that,

“Yes, by applying all kinds or different strategies. Ang mga challenges naku kay behavioral difficult to handle. Akong gigamit sa akong klase kay different style and techniques. Ang akong mga activities na ginagamit kay individual ug group. Yes, effective siya kay by developing their social behavior being with others in group activities”

(Yes, by applying all kinds or different strategies. My challenges are behavioral which is difficult to handle. I used different styles and techniques in class. The activities I am using individual and group. Yes, it is effective in

developing their social behavior, and being with others in group activities.)

Moreover, FGD_T02 and FGD_T03 shared that,

“Mga difficult situation in handling inclusive class like behavior, mga basic skills. *Ginatagaan naku sila og activities na fits sa ilaha.*” FGD_T02

(Difficult situation such as handling inclusive class behavior, basic skills. I gave them activities that fits them.)

“*Hatagan siya og activity na pwede sa iyaha*” FGD_T03

(Gave activity that is fitted to him/her.)

In addition, FGD_P03 expressed that,

“*Nagapaactivity man si teacher sa ilaha kay makita man naku sa portfolio niya, sa papel ilang output, gicheck man. Sa GC pud gasend siya og output sa bata kanang manganta, sayaw ug magsula-sulat. Kadtong nanglimpyo ko naay basket-basket si teacher didto nakabutang ang trabaho sa mga bata, inig mahuman sila sa trabahoon ibutang nila didto.*”

(The teacher gave activities to them because it was shown in their portfolio, in the paper that was checked by the teacher. In our GC the teacher sent the output when they were singing, dancing, and writing. When I cleaned, the teacher had a basket where the outputs of the learners were placed, after they accomplished the task.)

3.2.4. Maximize Available Learning Materials

The ability to support learning can be found in many forms and sizes of learning materials. In order to facilitate learning inside an inclusive classroom, the participants used manipulative learning materials such as counters, big books, puzzles, and blocks. They pointed out that it helps in developing cognitive, gross, and fine motor skills.

In line with this, IDI_T01 stated that,

“*Oo, naa koy manipulatives, toys, manipulative learning materials mao akong gipanggamit. Pareha atong mga bata na hyperactive tagaan nimu sila og mga activities like makamanipulate like realia magpuyo lang sila didto lang sila magfocus atleast dili makadistract sa ilang classmate sa mga classmate nila na serious kaayo*”

(Yes, I have manipulative toys, these are the learning materials that I am using. For children with hyperactivity, I gave them activities that they can manipulate such as realia so they can focus and will not distract their classmates who are serious.)

Moreover, FGD_T01 added that,

“*Yes, naa mi materials sama sa counters, storybooks, blocks na makatabang sa ilang like developing their motor skills na kasagaran ginabuhat namo sa circle time.*”

(Yes, we have materials such as counters, storybooks, and blocks to help develop their motor skills that we do during circle time.)

Likewise, FGD_T02 shared that,

“*Yes, naa mi materials like storybook, counters, blocks of time para mdevelop ang gross motor skills, cognitive skills, fine motor skills.*”

(Yes, we have materials like storybooks, counters, and blocks of time to develop their gross motor skills, cognitive skills, and fine motor skills.)

Additionally, FGD_T03 pointed that,

“*Yes naa mi materials same lang kog ginagamit sa ilaha tanan like counters, storybook, blocks para dali makakat-on sa counting, motor skills.*”

(Yes, we have the same materials that I used for all of them like counters, storybooks, and blocks so they can easily count and motor skills.)

Further, FGD_P03 attested that,

“Engon akong anak gadula-dula silag blocks ug puzzle sa iyang classmates ug naa pud bigbooks si teacher kung magbasa-basa sila. Mag-ihap sila gamit ang popsicle sticks.”

(My child told me that they are playing blocks and puzzles together with their classmates and they also have big books when they read. They count using popsicle sticks.)

The above-mentioned statements were the responses of the participants in relation to the themes which emerged in the coping mechanism of Gen Ed kindergarten teachers on handling diverse learners.

3.3. Insights of Teachers and Parents on Inclusive Education Practices

This portion focused on the insights of Gen Ed Kindergarten teachers and parents on the IE practices in kindergarten program that can be shared to others. As I have reviewed the participants' responses three (3) major themes manifested (1) inclusion develops socio-emotional skills of diverse young learners; (2) inclusion increases teachers' competence; and (3) inclusion builds strong relations among Gen Ed kindergarten teachers, SpEd teachers, and parents.

3.3.1. Inclusion develops Socio-emotional Skills of Diverse Young Learners

Socio-emotional skills are one of the developmental areas that need to develop among young children. It plays a significant role in establishing and maintaining relationships and engaging in various peer or group activities. It enables these young diverse learners to accomplish particular tasks, such as recognizing and managing their emotions and coping successfully with conflict in inclusive setting.

As experienced by the participants, this theme emerged as one of the insights of the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers and the parents in the inclusive practices in their classroom.

In line with this, IDI_T01 shared that,

“Gi na assist sa regular ang mainstream, like inig checking sa papel ipa-una nila sila. Ginatabangan nila kung mag need og help. Ginatagaan nila og food ining recess. Yes, very effective, kay atleast inig sulod niya sa klase magduhaduha and walay madiscriminate, na ginaembrace siya sa iyang classmates.”

(The regular kindergarteners assist the mainstream kindergarteners. For instance, during checking of their outputs they let the mainstream learners come first. They also offer help when they need to. They share their foods during recess. Yes, it is very effective, at least the mainstream learners will not hesitate to come to the class, no one will be discriminated because their peers embrace them.)

Moreover, FGD_T01 stated that,

“Ang akong mga activities na ginagamit kay individual ug group. Yes, effective siya kay by developing their social behavior being with others in group activities.”

(The activities that I employ are individual and group based. Yes, it is effective because it develops their social behavior being with other in group activities.)

Likewise, FGD_T03 mentioned that,

“Nagapadula-dula ko sa ilaha sa circle time. Yes, effective kay magparticipate man sila, mag-engage man sila. Ang mga regular na bata sige lang pamantay sa mainstream learners, pag mantatrum ang mainstream gina hug ang bata.”

(I let them play during circle time. Yes, it is effective because they participate, and they engage in the activity. The regular learners always look after the mainstream learners, and if they throw tantrums, they hug them.)

In addition, FGD_T02 expressed that,

“.. ang uban concern sila, ilang tabangan.”

(The other regular kindergarteners are concern towards the mainstream

kindergarteners, and they also help them.)

The mentioned practices are also confirmed by the parent participants, FGD_P01 mentioned that,

“Tabangan pud sila sa ilang classmates didto sa room. Sa akua maam noh karon na nakahalobilo na siya sa mga bata kay dili na siya maulaw, nya confident na siya, mag Hi na siya or Hello.”

(Their classmates help them in their classroom. For me Ma’am, now that he is exposed and get acquainted with his peers, he is not shy anymore, he is confident, and he greets like “Hi” or “Hello”.)

Also, FGD_P02 affirmed that,

“Pasalamat ko na naeskwela na kay makaila na og tao sauna sigeg dagan dagan na walay kapadulngan.”

(I am thankful that he is now in school because he can mingle with others, unlike before he would just run without any direction.)

Further, FGD_P03 shared that

“Ako isip usa ka ginikanan ifollow-up naku akong anak, unya ipasabot naku sa iyaha na klase-klase imung classmates na kailangan na mahimamat gani.”

(Me, as a parent I will follow up my child and make her understand that she has diverse classmates that she needs to get along with.)

3.3.2. Inclusion increases Teachers' Competence

Every teacher must be capable of performing their duties with the highest passion in order to feel fulfillment from the nature of their work. Hence, teachers' competence has a significant impact on young diverse young learners' holistic development and skills. It shows how a teacher applies his/her teaching techniques, strategies, and classroom management to deliver his/her instruction effectively in an inclusive setting.

As one of the themes emerged, the participants responded that handling inclusive class boost their competence as a teacher trained or untrained.

In line with this, IDI_T01 stated that,

“Yes, I accept the challenge in order to help me also in my professional growth and development kung effective ba ko na teacher not only to cater the regular class but also the children with special needs. Para ma-test naku akong self kung effective ba ko?”

(Yes, I accepted the challenge in order to help me in my professional growth and development if I am an effective teacher, not only to cater the regular class but also the children with special needs. So, I can test myself if was I an effective teacher?)

In addition, IDI_T01 elaborated that,

“Challenging ang inclusive education kay diha nimu madetermine unsaon nimu paghandle ang mga bata, naa kay learners with special needs (LSENs), naa kay hyperactive, mahutdan kag dugo kung dili ka kabalo unsaon paghandle.”

(Inclusive education is challenging it is where you can determine how to handle diverse learners, you have learners with special educational needs (LSENs), you have hyperactive, you will be burnt-out if you don't know how to handle.)

Moreover, FGD_T01 attested that,

“Challenging jud ang inclusive class, mag-adjust ko ug ang mga bata pud, labaw na kung out-of-control ang behavior sa mga bata, human ana, personally I talk to the learner.”

(The inclusive class is challenging, me and the learners adjust to changes, especially if the learners' behavior is out of control, after it, I personally talk to the learner.)

On the other hand, teacher participants shared same insights FGD_T02 and FGD_T03 shared that,

“Kung naa ka sa diri (inclusive class) kailangan og heart, taasan pasensiya, classroom management pud. Though same lang man akong treatment sa ilaha tanan though lahi-lahi man silag needs na need icater maningkamot man sila.” FGD_T02

(If you were here (inclusive class) you need a heart, you must stretch your patience, and deal with classroom management. Though, I have same treatment to all my learners, despite their differences that I need to cater they thrive hard in my class.) FGD_T02

“Sa akong experience sa paghandle ani na klase dapat naa kay heart na motudlo, pasenya, wala man tay choice kay trabaho nato, ni follow man tag orders. Kadugayan, at ease nalang na ang in ani (inclusive class) sa situation. Normal nalang jud kay walay mabuhay kay mao man atong propesyon.” FGD_T03

(In my experience on handling an inclusive class, you need to have a heart to teach and patience, we do not have choice because it is our work, we follow orders. Gradually, it easier to handle this setting. It is normal, and we cannot do about it, it is the nature of our profession) FGD_T03

Further, FGD_P02 confirmed that,

“Consistent man si teacher ma manage man niya ang mga bata, depende siguro sa personality sa maestra po. Ganahan pud ko para magpuyo akong bata.”

(The teacher is consistent in managing her class, maybe it depends with the teacher's personality. I like it so that my child will behave.)

3.3.3. Inclusion Builds Strong Relations among Gen Ed Kindergarten Teachers, SpEd Teachers, and Parents

In any program, it is important for teachers to engage the parents where they are in their child's education journey to meet the child's needs halfway, by listening and showing compassion. Listen to what the teachers or parents say, what their expectations and hopes are for their child, and what their child is like, their interests, hobbies, 'needs', and challenges. As one of the themes came out building strong relations among Gen Ed kindergarten teachers, SpEd teachers and parents shared their insights on IE practices.

In line with this, IDI_T01 stated that,

“Uu, nangita kog tabang sa imuha (SpEd Teacher) mga advices, trainings mga giexplain nimu sa amoa, pareha sa giengon nimu unsaon pagtudlo sa bata pagsulat. Yes, of course and effective kay si Empie (regular kindergartener) pa lang daan kay ibasi nimu karon wow gisend naku sa lola. It really helps a lot 100% atleast the next time I will encounter problems like that kabalo naku unsaon pag-address.”

(Yes, I seek help from you (SpEd Teacher) for your advice, training, and the things that you taught us, just like what you said, how to teach a child to write. Yes it is effective if you based it on Empie (regular kindergartener), wow he improved a lot and I send his output to his grandmother. It really help me 100%, and at least the next time I encountered a similar problem I know now how to address it.)

Consequently, the parents and SpEd teachers' involvement in IE is significant FGD_T01 shared that,

“Para ma address na concern kay by knowing their learning differences, backgrounds and have constant communication with the parents. Ako, need jud namo og tabang sa inyo (SpEd teachers) kay dili naman ni malikayan ug iaccept na challenge na kailangan pa og more knowledge unsaon paghandle ing ani na klase ug kooperasyon pud sa mga tao sa palibot ug kinahanglan naa kay dakong pagsabot unsaon pag cater sa diverse learners.”

(To address the concerns, we must know their learning differences, backgrounds and have constant communication with the parents. Personally, we need help from you (SpEd teachers) because we cannot avoid it, hence I accepted the challenge. However, I need more knowledge on how to handle this inclusive class, cooperation from stakeholders, and in-depth understanding on how to cater these diverse learners.)

Moreover, FGD_T02 elaborated that,

“Kinahanglan makabalo jud ang ginikanan na kung naa ka sa diri (inclusive class) siguro kailangan og heart, taasan pasensiya, classroom management pud though same lang man akong treatment sa ilaha tanan though lahi-lahi man silag needs na need icater maningkamot man sila.”

(The parents must know what is happening here (inclusive class). It needs a heart, more patience, deal with classroom management. Though, I have same treatment to all my learners, despite their differences that I need to cater they thrive hard in my class.)

On the other hand, FGD_P01 claimed that,

“Ako isip usa ka ginikanan mosupporta ko sa iyaha maam ug mangutana ko sa teacher kung unsa pa akong mabuhat para sa akong anak, kay klase-klase baya na bata ilang gitudluan unya unsaon nalang ug magdungan og pabanglong.”

(Me, as a parent I will support the teacher, and I will as her on what I could help for my child, because she caters diverse learners and what if all of them misbehave at the same time.)

Likewise, FGD_P02 also confirmed that,

“Motoo unsay eengon sa maestra para ra man sad na sa kaayohan sa among mga bata.”

(I will follow whatever our teacher told us, because it is for the welfare of our children.)

Furthermore, FGD_P03 affirmed that,

“Siguro kanang magparticipate sa mga trabahoon para sa among mga kabataan para makatabang mi sa among teacher.”

(Maybe to participate in our obligations for our children to help our teacher.)

All the voices stated above mirrored the views and experiences of the participants to the themes which emerged in the insights of Gen Ed kindergarten teachers and parents on the IE classroom practices that can be shared to others.

4. Discussions

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and understand the lived experiences Gen Ed kindergarten teachers particularly on the issues and challenges in handling diverse learners in an inclusive classroom, how they coped up the situation and their insights that could be shared to others. To obtain the important data, IDI, and FGD were employed using the validated given by the validators. All the questions formulated had been answered by the participants who shared significant information for analysis.

4.1. Issues and Challenges of General Education Kindergarten Teachers on Handling an Inclusive Classroom

The teachers and parents who were chosen as the participants expressed their issues and challenges on handling an inclusive class, five (5) major themes emerged namely: (1) inadequate understanding of IE of teachers and parents (diversity of learners); (2) difficulty of referral to special education specialist because of in denial parents; (3) class size; (4) lack of training of teachers; (5) limited instructional materials.

4.1.1. Inadequate Understanding of IE of Teachers and Parents (Diversity of Learners)

The data collected based on the questions regarding the experiences of Gen Ed kindergarten teachers and parents that they have insufficient perception about the concept of IE. This implies that there are parents and teachers struggles on the implementation of the program. Hence, both are in the process of adjustment.

In line with this, Hunter et al., 2014 stated that 90% of the public primary school teachers interviewed in his study shows negative perceptions towards IE and its implementation in Bahamas. Prominent factors which influenced these negative perceptions included insufficient teacher training, lack of resources and support, poor infrastructure, and large class sizes. Several teachers indicated, however, that the solution of these negative influencing factors would possibly result in more positive perceptions towards the practice of IE.

IE is a procedural practice of effecting maximum learning among LWDs within the Gen Ed setting (Muega, 2016). In the Philippines, both in the cities and remote or rural areas, many public schools remain ill-equipped. This could be one of the reasons why many general education teachers in the Philippines doubt their capacity to teach in an inclusive school. At this point, teachers in the Philippines—trained or not—must accept that they will be overworked in an inclusive environment because, if taken seriously, the presence of students with special needs in a large class necessitates the creation of multiple lesson plans. While inclusion policy has been already introduced in the Philippines, many schoolteachers have yet to fully appreciate the value of IE.

Moreover, Muega (2016) stated that despite the claimed of parents and teachers on their familiarity with IE they still expressed doubts regarding their conceptions and practice of IE. Evidence shown in the study that parents and teachers were unsure as to the acceptability of their definitions.

According to Alhassan (2014) teachers were found to hold some positive attitudes toward inclusion but had little knowledge of inclusive practices. This was evident in the limited use of instructional adaptations to meet individual needs. Experience teaching LWDs in the classroom and knowledge of SpEd were found to be effective in attitudes and knowledge and in teachers' implementation of inclusion.

4.1.2. Referral to Special Education Specialist

Collaboration among service providers is essential for special education and the same way to IE as Gen Ed teachers experience inadequate trainings in handling LWDs. The participants expressed the need of other SpEd specialist.

Teachers are expected to work with diverse learners that have a variety of needs and abilities, claim Werts et al. (2014). Only a small number of SpEd instructors have the competence needed by IE teachers. Collaboration and professional development issues are made more difficult by a lack of skilled staff and extensive relevant service providers, which restricts the ability to offer comprehensive services.

Friend et al. (2010) cited in their study that co-teaching, of instruction by a Gen Ed teacher and a SpEd teacher or another specialist in a Gen Ed class that includes LWDs proved to have significant in the process of inclusion. For example, speech/language therapists and counselors may find themselves participants in co-teaching. School psychologists will engage in the decision making regarding the suitability of this instructional strategy for specific LWD. It demonstrates that via collaboration professionals can build novel solutions inside a single system of education that is more sensitive to the diversity of today's learners.

Further, Dagli et al. (2020) stated that co-teaching practices in all-inclusive environments had positive effects on the development of learners' comprehension skills and that these practices responded to their academic and social needs. One of the most noteworthy of these effects on the young learners is that they enjoyed increased self-confidence in their reading skills and developed a positive attitude towards co-teaching.

4.1.3. Class Size

The data gathered proved that class sizes of Gen Ed kindergarten teachers in an inclusive classroom affects the teaching and learning process of diverse young learners as IE being implemented in public schools. Dela Cruz (2020) probed that handling inclusive class increased in workload to the Gen Ed teachers.

Studies that have already been conducted provide some consideration to elements other than teachers, such as the overall environment of special educational needs and school administration. According to reports, there is insufficient evaluation data available for school variables like school or class size (Reed et al., 2011).

There is a critical need for principals who can distinctly define and articulate a mission that incorporates the values of acceptance as schools become more inclusive. The principal must create an environment where the school values the success and accomplishment of all students if inclusion is to be successful (Horrocks et al., 2008).

Lastly, Zarghami et al. (2004) mentioned that class size is one environmental contextual factor that affects both teacher's moral and student academic achievement. Smaller class sizes generally appear to promote higher level of engagement and

instructional individualization. Smaller case load may be associated with higher teacher retention rates.

4.1.4. Lack of training of teachers

IE system views that if a child is not learning, the problem lies in the education system and not in the LWDs. Insufficient training of teachers is issue that arouse and highlighted in the study as it affects the success of the implementation of IE. As mentioned by Dela Cruz (2020) in her study confirmed one of the different challenges faced by regular teachers is the lack of training or seminar in handling LWDs.

This is supported by Tiyaqi (2016) as he claimed in his study that it is commonly suggested that a lack of understanding on the part of classroom teachers, owing to a lack of training, is the main impediments to inclusion. Inclusion entails the use of assistance, the ways in which teachers respond to individual variations during whole class instruction, the decisions they make concerning group work and they apply expert knowledge. The teacher's role is not only to teach the subject but also to provide other training such as mobility training, self-care training, and preparation of teaching material according to the needs of the LWDs (Muega, 2019).

Moreover, it was also emphasized that educators who support inclusion pointed out significant implementation issues. Because they believe they did not obtain sufficient training or professional development to adequately introduce inclusion into their classrooms, teachers feel underprepared to teach in an inclusive environment (Parveen & Qounsar, 2018)

According to Smith et al. (2003), many Gen Ed and SpEd teachers feel that they were not prepared to plan and make adaptations for LWDs. According to research, teacher training frequently overlooks and provides insufficient attention to inclusion.

4.1.5. Limited instructional Materials

Lack of adequate teaching and learning resources affects the implementation of IE in kindergarten classrooms. The participants pointed out that though they have some materials that are useable it is still limited just books, counters and blocks but these are not enough especially to those LWDs.

In relations to that, Okongo et al (2015) stated in their study that the availability essential learning resources such Braille slates, huge prints, audiotapes and loudspeakers, wheelchairs, crutches and sandpaper letters when made available led to increased pupil enrolment and retention. However, the hurdles to acquisition of teaching and learning resources owing to lack of finance, ridged procurement procedures, unavailability of material and market logistics needs to be solved by effective procurement rules.

Further, school managers should enhance linkages with professional groups, special schools, development partners and other stakeholders for the purpose of acquiring facilities/books and improve the infrastructure (Buhere & Ochieng, 2013). The provision of adequate and appropriate teaching and learning resources may not be enough for successful inclusion, but the techniques to utilize and maintain these resources in Gen Ed settings may achieve desired results. Buhere et al., 2013 underlined that school managers should also coordinate and increase collaboration between SpEd teachers and regular teachers for optimal use of teaching/learning resources and claimed that school managers and educators' lack of knowledge and skills has slackened the inclusive process.

4.2. Coping Mechanism of General Education Kindergarten Teachers on Handling Diverse Learners

Along with the challenges faced by the teachers on the implementation of IE, they managed to develop coping mechanism to overcome such challenges. After analyzing the transcripts of the responses of the participants, four (4) major themes were manifested: (1) seek support from SpEd teachers; (2) employ reinforcement and reward system; (3) differentiated instruction; and (4) maximize learning materials.

4.2.1. Seek Support from Special Education Teachers

Seeking assistance allows teachers to surround themselves with people who can make them feel good and facilitate further development. The Gen Ed kindergarten teacher participants believed that getting support from SpEd teachers like advice, ideas and techniques are a great help in properly handling diverse young learners, the LWDs in particular. Moreover, they also emphasized that even there is insufficient trainings about inclusive education, they strive to do their best to manage these diverse learners.

In line with this, Cook et al. (2019) and McLeskey et al. (2017) stated that to give LWDs the chance to learn, SpEd teachers must employ effective methods. Teachers in SpEd and Gen Ed must respect one another, be open to the inclusionary ethos, have strong administrative backing, and be knowledgeable about how to address the needs of LWDs.

Moreover, these teachers must work together in today's educational systems to fulfill the different needs of diverse young children. Due to insufficient planning time, a lack of parity, and interpersonal differences, the Gen Ed and SpEd teachers in inclusion classes exhibit a lack of synergistic partnerships (Fluijt et al., 2016; Pratt, 2014; Strogilos et al., 2016). On the contrary, lack of teamwork among regular teachers and SpEd teachers is a struggle in IE program as revealed by Dela Cruz (2020).

Further, Florian (2017) asserted that the foundation of inclusiveness is collaboration. Symbiosis can be attained by inclusion classroom teachers who work to strengthen their working connections (Pratt, 2014). Teachers constructively work together to accomplish shared goals by achieving symbiosis.

4.2.2. Employ Reinforcements and Rewards System

One instrument teacher employs to support academic excellence and self-esteem is reinforcement for diverse young learners. The result of the study manifested that the use of intangible rewards like thumbs up, clapping, and praises, and the tangible rewards such as food or candies, toys, or services help manage the behavior of the learners.

In the past, teachers employed punishment as opposed to helpful reinforcement. Positive reinforcement in the classroom has, nevertheless, been more popular recently as educators realize its advantages. Sadly, some educators fail to recognize the advantages that positive reinforcement may have on a kindergartener and instead view it as rewarding a kid for doing something they ought to be doing anyhow. In support with this, Turney (1983) cited that verbal reinforcement includes praise like good job, you did it well, etc.

Moreover, the participants shared the benefits of positive and negative reinforcement to inhibit the desired behavior or learning outcome of the diverse young learners. In order to preserve children's' behavior, a teacher can employ verbal reinforcement.

It has been discovered as a successful method of raising children's participation in the classroom (Jordan et al., 2009;).

According to studies (Brophy, 2006; Landrum & Kauffman, 2006; Swinson & Harrop, 2001), teachers must endorse learners' behavior in order to increase learners' suitable academic and social behaviors and decrease improper behaviors. Disapproval behavior is characterized as teachers reprimanding and criticizing following an incorrect behavior with a vocal or nonverbal response (Swinson & Harrop, 2001). But the last tactic that teachers should use is to express displeasure of their behavior (Landrum & Kauffman, 2006).

4.2.3. Differentiated Instruction

A differentiated instruction approach gives teachers the flexibility to meet the requirements of a variety of learners demographics. It involves responding effectively to the differences that exist among learners in the classroom. The adoption of sitting arrangements, games and group activities are some of the instructions provided by the participants to their inclusive classroom setting.

In relation to this, two studies (Moosa & Shareefa, 2019; Faber et al., 2018) claimed that Differentiated Instruction as an approach has a positive impact on students' educational success and that applying it consistently is important. Goddard and Minjung (2018) also emphasized that the DI model consists of philosophies that build upon pupils' learning, such as (a) every learner has areas of strength and areas that need support; (b) learners are unique beings, so their brains are quite distinctive; (c) learning has no age limit; and (d) every learner can learn, though each may learn differently and at different times.

In addition, Valiandes (2015) asserted that DI is a crucial addition to educational systems all around the world because it offers specialized instruction that better satisfies students' diverse learning demands. A philosophy of teaching founded on the premise that students learn best when accommodations are made based on their readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles (Tomlinson et al., 2003, p. 263).

Moreover, teacher's effective responses to the disparities among diverse kindergarteners in the classroom are part of differentiated instruction. According to Tomlinson (2001), teachers differentiate whether they work with a learner or a small group of learners by changing their instructional approaches in an effort to create the best possible learning environment. Planning for diversified teaching recognizes and supports the classroom as a setting where children of comparable ages can and should be encouraged to become autonomous learners. By being "responsive to children's variable readiness levels, varying interests, and varying learning profiles," according to Tomlinson & Kalbfleisch, differentiated classrooms are effective (1998). (p. 54).

Furthermore, the participants uncovered that differentiated instruction is essential for various types of learners who perform well in school and those who struggle to provide appropriate activities relevant to their needs. Teachers can use varied instruction to meet the needs of individual students with diverse skill levels in the same classroom (Smit & Humpert, 2012; Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). Differentiation claims that teachers can create classes that incorporate a range of learner interests in order to further promote improved learner interest and test scores (Fitzgerald, 2016; Lauria, 2010). Access to a variety of tactics and supports, as well as an appropriate balance between difficulty and achievement, benefits all types of learners.

4.2.4. Maximize Available Learning Materials

The knowledge or content that is taught in a course is referred to as instructional materials. Lectures, readings, textbooks, multimedia lessons, and other materials make up this course. The study depicted that the use of manipulative materials such as counters, puzzles, big books, and blocks helps the development of the learner's cognitive, gross and fine motor skills.

According to Farombi (1998), the teaching aids comprise books, audiovisuals, software, and hardware of educational technology. The availability, appropriateness, and relevance of teaching aids in classrooms can have an impact on the caliber of instruction, which in turn can improve pupils' learning and academic success. In order to provide high-quality education, Farombi's knowledge on connecting instructional resources to pupils' academic success is crucial.

Furthermore, Oni (1992), stated that teachers employ instructional materials as a tactical instrument when preparing and presenting lessons. This is accurate because they give the teacher the opportunity to elaborate on a concept that would be challenging to do without a teaching tool. The young learners can learn more easily as a result, which improves their academic achievement.

Lastly, all other course elements, such as learning objectives, assessments, and activities, are coordinated with the best learning resources. It has been highlighted that using instructional materials effectively can promote effective teaching and learning. Instructional materials can be used to highlight the importance of good and sufficient materials in teaching and learning through their effective utilization in the classroom.

4.3. Insights of Teachers and Parents on Inclusive Education Practices

This portion centered on the insights of Gen Ed kindergarten teachers and parents on the IE practices in kindergarten program that can be shared to others. As I have scrutinized the participants' responses three (3) major themes manifested (1) inclusion develops socio-emotional skills of diverse young learners; (2) inclusion increases teachers' competence; and (3) inclusion builds strong relations among Gen Ed kindergarten teachers, SpEd teachers, and parents.

4.3.1. Inclusion develops Socio-emotional Skills of Diverse Young Learners

Young learners who engage in an inclusive environment make some adjustments to cope with their challenges in the class. The study revealed through inclusion programs both types of kindergarteners with or without disabilities impacted their socio-emotional development. They learn how to sympathize and empathize by showing concern and extending help to each other with the intervention of the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers.

The acceptance of the young LWDs in the kindergarten inclusive class opened a door for diverse learners to learn how to establish relations and make friends that gear them for better learning outcomes. As confirmed by Trinquand (2009), peer acceptance and friendship provide a wide range of learning development opportunities for children. The typical children have observed that people around them behave in many ways. Moreover, significant others like the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers and

the regular kindergarteners set as models as they imitate their behaviour. Imitating behaviour inside the classroom would have an impact to the educative process depends on what behaviour is acquired.

Hence, Gen Ed kindergarten teachers shared that they provided opportunities to the diverse young learners to increase their participation in inclusive class through group activities and creative play. These learners develop how to manage their emotions, maintain relationships and overcome their social conflict in their classes. Mamontayao (2017) mentioned in her study that, more children are educated in integrated settings; however, play skills usually need to be explicitly taught, and play environments must be carefully prepared to support effective social interactions (Harper, Symon & Frea, 2007). Likewise, Jung, Morrison & Sainato (2015) affirmed that inclusive kindergarten programs must allow for all social participation, the support of the childrens' academic growth, and access to general education curriculum as well as foster successful participation in assessment in preparation for first grade.

In addition, Odom, Buysse & Soukako (2011) said that children with disabilities in the classrooms learn from, interact and form relationships with typically developing children. Based on the responses, peer-mediated instruction opened an avenue in teaching different types of learners in an inclusive class. The regular kindergarteners assist the mainstream kindergarteners when they participate and they teach and prompt them to finish their tasks, reprimanding when displaying different behaviors and refraining from walking and to sit still. Adaptation in teaching strategies such as cooperative learning and peer-tutoring, can facilitate pupils learning process (Garrote, Sermier, & Moser, 2017).

Further, in the inclusive class the real challenge for the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers is designing successful inclusive programs that becomes one of accomplishing social immersion while achieving academic progress for all children in the classroom (Crosland & Dunlap, 2012). Moreover, Grindle et al. (2013) disclosed that diverse learners in the same classroom provides a foundation for understanding the benefits of inclusion for all children. Inclusive classrooms provide direct access to general education curricula and promote the development of social competency (Wolery & Hemmerter, 2011).

4.3.2. Inclusion increases Teachers' Competence

The competence of an educator is crucial to perform and fulfil his duties to the diverse young learners inside the inclusive classroom. The results demonstrated that trained or untrained Gen Ed kindergarten teachers' ability to cater the needs of various learners marks self-efficacy and competence which impacted to the learning outcomes of these young learners. The shared experience showed how they apply their teaching techniques, strategies, and classroom management to deliver their instruction effectively in their inclusive class.

Rabi and Zulkefli (2018) highlighted that teachers' competence is required to deliver appropriate knowledge, application, and attitude to learners in inclusive program. The participants pointed that successful mainstreaming in kindergarten program tested their effectivity as early childhood teachers which drive to improve the quality of teaching strategies, learning resource and classroom management, and the challenge of IE boost their professional growth and development.

Likewise, the participants elaborated in IE you will know how to handle diverse learners, that required adjustments, skills in teaching strategies to accommodate and modify instructions, design classroom activities suit for all types of learners, use a variety of instructional materials effectively, and the importance of reinforcements. Florian, 2012; Lancaster & Bain, 2010; Philpot, Furey & Penney (2010) have clearly proven that teachers need to know how to improve teaching and learning or innovate in teaching and should be exposed to various teaching strategies gleaned from the study of (Rabi and Zulkefli, 2018). As mentioned by the participants that in IE a heart to teach and huge patience is a must to address the needs of IE. Inclusive strategies are insufficient to enhance positive attitudes, effectiveness of teaching, or reduce anxiety without associating it with a broader context of inclusive education (Sharma, Simi & Forlin, 2015). hence the ability to provide the best teaching methods equally with inclusive values support the way teachers deal with complex features in the context of the 21st-century education (Di Gennaro et al., 2014).

Moreover, the participants featured their practices in managing their classes of being consistent with their instruction, establishing clear boundaries, and imposing positive discipline aside from reinforcements. Thus, it is apparently proven that classroom management skills play an important key role for Gen Ed kindergarten teachers to succeed in the IE program. Further, creating a learning environment for inclusive classrooms that is well-managed with clear structures and routines is of the utmost importance for child's success (Wong & Wong, 2014).

4.3.3. Inclusion Builds Strong Relations among Gen Ed Kindergarten Teachers, SpEd Teachers, and Parents

Establishing a strong support system for the success of IE program specifically in kindergarten education is significant to build a team including the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers, SpEd teachers, and the parents who are the core individuals in an inclusive classroom. The responses uncovered their insights to strengthen IE practices. They have revealed in IE that they asked assistance from SpEd teachers to address their teaching difficulties, constant communication with the parents is utilized to understand and know the childrens' background and learning differences. It was also shared the participation of the parents in IE is necessary, they must have a concrete idea what an IE is and how it is being handled by the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers. Likewise, the support of the parents to the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers is crucial element for success in inclusive settings.

As mentioned by Rabi and Zulkefli (2018) Gen Ed teachers must develop the skills necessary to work effectively with parents and with other professionals, such as psychologists, therapists, social workers, and specialist teachers, in order to implement effective inclusive special education (Hornby, 2015). Likewise, Mamontayao (2017) confirmed in her study that a successful inclusive environment includes assessment-driven intervention (Greenwood, Carta & McConnell, 2010), parent involvement and support (Sainato & Morrison, 2001), and teacher preparedness (Snyder, Hemmeter & McLaughlin, 2011).

Recent work of Dagli et al. (2020) highlighted that co-teaching techniques in an inclusive setting had a positive impact on the development of learners' comprehension abilities and that these techniques addressed the academic and social demands of the learners. Mentoring with specialists promotes positive impact on child's the learning outcomes in IE. Further, Cook et al. (2010) identified in their study that co-teaching of instruction by a Gen Ed teacher and a special education teacher or another specialist in an inclusive class that includes LWDs proved to have significant in the process of inclusion.

5. Implication for IE Practices

IE has been implemented in all public elementary schools particularly in the kindergarten level in order to provide all learners with the most appropriate learning environments and opportunities for them to best achieve their potential. The program has been helping the teachers and parents to properly supervise diverse learners in an inclusive classroom. The study successfully gathered the experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights of the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers and parents on the implementation of IE in their respective classrooms. Their overall perspectives were summarized through the continuum which presented the general themes that emerged from the varied responses of the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers and parents. This study provided an avenue for all the school administrators, teachers, students, and DepEd Officials to understand the real-life issues and challenges of Gen Ed kindergarten teachers and parents on the implementation of IE.

In the light of results of the study, the DepEd Officials may conduct evaluation on the effectiveness of IE implementation to all public elementary schools specifically in kindergarten program. As they evaluate, they may consider having another set of trainings in inclusive education especially for those Gen Ed kindergarten teachers who are still untrained so that they can acquire sufficient knowledge and understanding on how to implement the IE. They may also help the schools and teachers (SpEd and Gen Ed) in disseminating information to parents who are denial on the condition of their children. In addition, they may also help the school and teachers by providing special educators or professionals who can give an official and further diagnosis to the learners based on the results of an assessment. They may improve the implementation of IE particularly in kindergarten classrooms by considering the reduction of class sizes. Further, they may allocate financial support for the instructional materials needed for the instruction of the teachers. They may consider this study to find a solution to the different issues and challenges faced by the Gen Ed kindergarten teachers and parents in the implementation of IE.

The School Administrators, grade heads and master teachers may conduct thorough in-service training on the implementation of IE for the remaining Gen Ed kindergarten teachers since the Division Office could not afford to include all the public kindergarten teachers in Division-wide training. In addition, they may conduct as well learning action cell (LAC) regarding the proper interventions to the learners identified with special education needs and learning difficulties. Through that, teachers may acquire appropriate strategies and approaches in addressing the needs of the learners. Further, they may include in crafting the school improvement plan (SIP) the relevant IE activities and programs and append developmental funds in MOOE to fund the materials needed for the instruction in IE. They may also provide additional sections to decrease the number of class sizes in kindergarten classrooms. Aside from that, they may also conduct general orientation about the assessment to the parents of the learners to give them awareness of its implication to their children. Since, there are a lot of parents who are unsupportive, uncooperative, and in-denial to the status of their children.

The Gen Ed kindergarten teachers may improve their practices in the implementation of IE and use it effectively to help and address the needs of diverse young learners. This may give them the motivation to continue with the implementation despite the challenges and problems they encounter.

Further, they may think of ways to sustain the interest of the learners during the conduct of the lesson by motivating them through employing reinforcements and reward system, since kindergarten learners tend to have a short attention span. They may continue being committed, patient, and resourceful in teaching, and helping the learners. In addition, it is permissible to maintain the practice of optimizing learning materials through differentiated instruction in the delivery of lessons. They may remain coordinated and collaborate with their colleagues particularly the SpEd teachers by sharing ideas, knowledge, and experiences that may be helpful and essential in instructional planning and coping the challenges that they may encounter during the implementation. Lastly, they may strengthen their communication with their parents regarding the situation and standing of their children at school and have more patience in dealing with them.

In addition, results of the study may give idea to the parents to develop stronger connections and relationship towards school and teachers. This may be the ground to build strong partnership and collaboration with the parents to the teachers in school. Also, they may see the importance of the IE in the holistic development of their children.

Likewise, for the diverse young learners who are the primary recipients of the program, this may be crucial in enabling them from varied backgrounds to complete certain tasks, such as identifying and controlling their emotions and resolving conflict successfully in an inclusive setting. This may encourage them to cooperate with their teacher during the class as for all these endeavors are for their own good and benefit.

Finally, because everyone wanted to have effective quality education and no child must be left behind, helping teachers among stakeholders of the school must be valued through implementing IE that is helpful and beneficial to all types of learners.

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