

Qualitative Study on Teachers' Attitudes Towards Learners with Disabilities in Special Education program

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Abstract

This qualitative study investigated the attitudes of the teachers to the learners with disabilities in the Special Education program. The research aims to provide a localized understanding of the experiences, influence, and its effects to the teachers' attitudes to disabled learners. Utilizing interviews with five participants from Isulan Central School SPED Center, division of Sultan Kudarat, the study employed thematic analysis for data interpretation. The findings revealed that teachers' attitudes are influenced by a combination of personal experiences, professional training, available resources, and institutional support. Teachers emphasized the importance of differentiated instruction, inclusive lesson planning, and fostering respect and supportive interactions. Strategies such as implementing Universal Design for Learning and ensuring equitable access for all students were central to their teaching practices. Social and professional influences, including personal beliefs, values, and experiences, also played a significant role in shaping attitudes. While challenges such as limited training, insufficient resources, and inadequate community collaboration were noted, teachers displayed resilience by adopting flexible, adaptive approaches and prioritizing continuous personal and professional development. This study highlights the critical need for educational institutions to provide targeted professional development programs to enhance teachers' skills and knowledge. Additionally, it underscores the responsibility of local government units (LGUs) to offer essential support services and of the Department of Education (DepEd) to deliver comprehensive training for teachers. Despite these challenges and influences, the teachers effectively employed supportive strategies to navigate difficulties, highlighting the importance of teaching flexibility, adaptation as well as continuous personal development.

Keywords: Learners with Disabilities; Teachers' attitudes ; Group dynamics

1. Introduction

People with disabilities have often been stigmatized and underestimated throughout history. This stigma is believed to negatively impact their socio-educational inclusion (WHO, 2001). The negative attitude towards learners with disabilities occurs because they assume that students with disabilities will not benefit to a larger extent in regular schools than in Special education classes (Metsal & Harkins, 2020). Moreover, older teachers were more likely to have unfavorable attitudes towards integration, showing a negative correlation with the generally positive attitude identified (Sisto, et al. 2021). Teachers' beliefs significantly shape classroom behaviors, as these perceptions greatly influence their attitudes and inclusive practices in addressing the needs of students with disabilities (Jordan 2018).

In most countries, there is significant variation in the types of educational opportunities available to disabled children compared to their non-disabled peers (Wodon et al., 2018). In Uganda, clans and tribes often hold negative attitudes toward disability. As a result, children with disabilities (CWD) are frequently not recognized by their father's clan and are denied certain family benefits, such as inheritance. Likewise, divorced mothers of CWD are often unable to claim financial support from their former husbands (Mtetwa, and Nyikahadzoi, 2013). Similarly, in Iraq and India, the education of children with disabilities is heavily influenced by cultural and religious contexts. (Alborz et al. 2013, Limaye, 2016). Educational policies for children with disabilities often appear unclear, both in their goals and in their methods (Makoelle 2020, Mills 2020, Sheehy and Budiyanto, 2013). Broad educational directives are often neither fully understood nor implemented at the local school or district level (Alborz et al. 2013).

Palestinian teachers and school staff generally still struggle to understand the difference between inclusion

and integration adding to negative perception (Ashbee and Guldberg 2018). In Ghana and Indonesia, implementing the transition for children with disabilities is challenging because teachers struggle to carry out policy directives at the ground level. Additionally, the effectiveness of inclusive education is often undermined by the ambiguity of its goals and mission (Sheehy and Budiyo 2014, Mills 2020). There is a general absence of a national education policy specifically aimed at children with disabilities, along with a lack of supporting laws and government services (Limaye 2016). Furthermore, Teachers in the Philippines show negative attitude towards learners with disabilities and their inclusion in regular classes (Zerrudo, 2022).

Compared to children without disabilities, children with disabilities face more challenges in completing all levels of education UNICEF (2018). Thus, this study aims to delve deeper into these multifaceted influences on teachers' attitudes towards learners with disabilities, offering insights into effective strategies for promoting inclusive education practices in contemporary educational settings.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

This study sought to discover the problems faced by selected teachers who teach learners with intellectual disabilities in the transition program at Isulan Central School SPED Center, Sultan Kudarat Division, during the School Year 2024-2025. Using a phenomenological approach, the study employed interviews to collect relevant data. The objective was to identify the challenges these teachers encounter in teaching English to students with disabilities within their institutions. It is important to note that the study involved only five (5) participants, so the findings may not fully represent the perspectives of all participants or the institution.

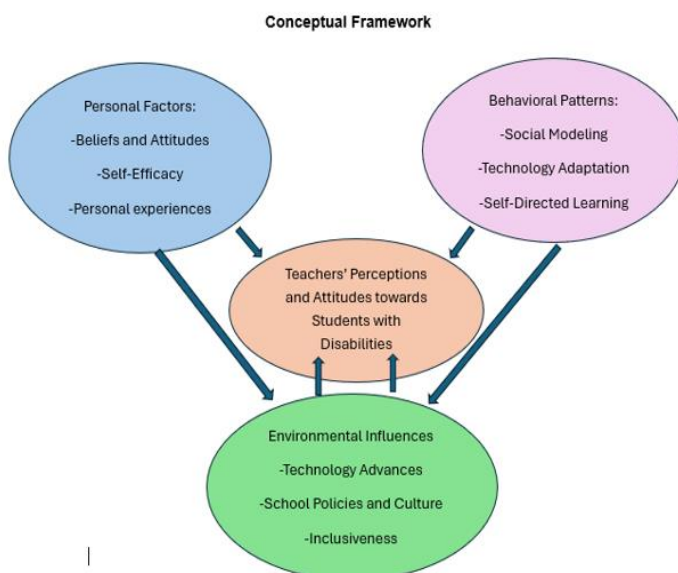
1.3 Research Questions

The objective of this study is to determine the Teachers' attitudes towards learners with disabilities

Specifically, this study aims to address the following sub-problems:

- To explore how beliefs, attitudes, self-efficacy, and personal experiences influence teachers' perceptions of learners with disabilities.
- To examine the impact of personal factors, behavioural patterns, and environmental influences on teachers' attitudes towards learners with disabilities.
- To consider the effect of environmental factors like technology advances, school policies, and inclusiveness on teachers' perceptions.
- To seek to recommendations based on the study's findings to enhance attitudes towards learners with disabilities.

1.4 Theoretical Lens



According to Bandura, attitudes are shaped by personal factors like beliefs and self-efficacy, where teachers' beliefs about their capability to effectively teach students with disabilities influence their attitudes and behavior. Observational learning, a key tenet of Bandura's theory, suggests that teachers adopt attitudes and behavior through social modeling and self-directed learning, where exposure to inclusive practices and ongoing professional development positively influence their attitudes. Environmental factors, including technological advancements and school policies promoting inclusiveness, further play critical roles in shaping teachers' attitudes by providing supportive tools and institutional frameworks. Bandura's framework thus highlights the complex interplay of personal, behavioral, and environmental factors in understanding and promoting positive attitudes towards students with

disabilities among educators (Bandura, 2003)

METHODOLOGY

This chapter depicts the methods applied in this qualitative research. It includes the research design, research participants, data analysis, trustworthiness of the study, and ethical consideration.

2.1 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative approach, utilizing a case study as its foundational framework. Phenomenology was employed to examine the lived experiences of individuals in relation to a social phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2016). By conducting in-depth interviews with five teachers of learners with disabilities, the study aimed to delve into the complex details and personal interpretations surrounding the challenges, coping strategies, and insights linked to teachers' attitudes toward disabilities, particularly as shaped by technology, modeling, and self-directed learning. The qualitative nature of these interviews facilitated a comprehensive exploration of each participant's unique perspectives, as emphasized by Moustakas (2020).

2.2 Participants

The participants in this study were chosen based on specific criteria: they were teachers from the Sultan Kudarat division who worked with learners with intellectual disabilities in the transition program and had a minimum of three years of experience teaching students with disabilities. The study involved five participants and employed a qualitative approach, utilizing expressive and persuasive language to describe the process. Following data collection, the researcher analyzed the meanings behind the participants' statements (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The study aimed to identify the attitudes of teachers in educating students with disabilities.

2.3 Data Analysis

This qualitative research utilized thematic analysis as the primary method to examine the attitudes of teachers to learners with disabilities in the special education program. The study adhered to the data analysis steps outlined by Clark and Braun (2019), which include familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, organizing the codes into themes, reviewing and refining these themes through an iterative process, and ultimately defining and naming the final themes. This structured approach ensures a comprehensive exploration of the teachers' experiences in educating learners with intellectual disabilities in the transition program. By applying this methodology, the study seeks to offer meaningful insights into the teachers at Isulan Central School SPED Center in supporting their learners with disabilities.

2.4 Trustworthiness of the Study

Integrity and Transparency: The researchers prioritized honesty and openness in all communications related to the study. Data and information were preserved in their original form, free from any distortion or manipulation for personal gain. Additionally, interview questions were thoughtfully designed to avoid any offensive or discriminatory language, ensuring respect and propriety toward both the research and its participants.

Credibility: The researchers ensured credibility by meticulously collecting and documenting relevant information through interviews and observations. This thorough process guarantees the reliability and trustworthiness of the data, thereby enhancing the validity of the research findings.

Confirmability: To prevent biases, the researchers conducted detailed checks and rechecks of all data collected, including manual verification. This diligent approach upholds the accuracy and integrity of the research results.

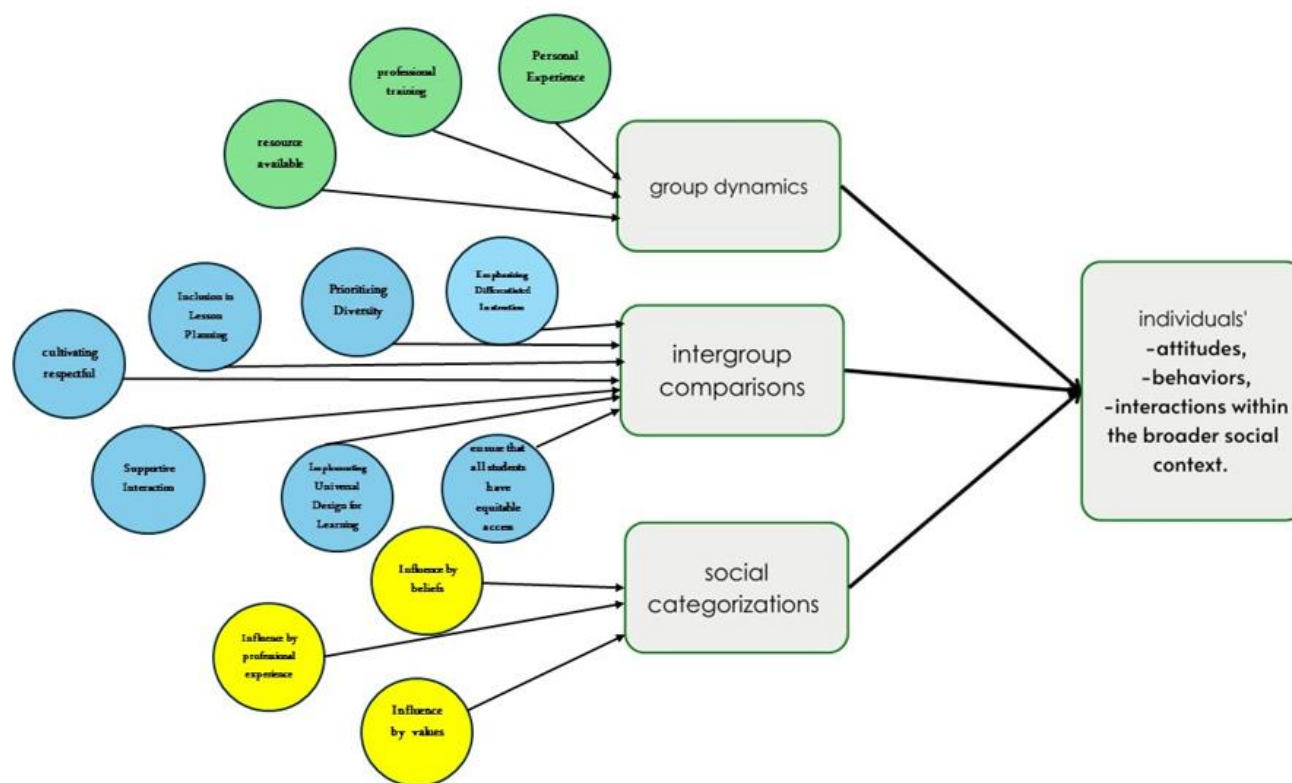
2.5 Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations were a cornerstone of this research on teachers of the learners with disabilities, adhering to the principles outlined in the Belmont Report (1979). The researchers maintained ethical standards throughout the study, emphasizing respect for the dignity and rights of participants to prevent any form of exploitation. The study, centered on exploring the attitudes of teachers to learners with disabilities at Isulan Central School SPED Center, was guided by its social value.

Informed consent was obtained from the Special Education teachers, with a clear explanation provided regarding the study's purpose, objectives, confidentiality measures, and potential outcomes of their participation. Privacy and confidentiality were rigorously upheld, ensuring that all personal and professional information shared by participants remained protected, shielding them from any risk of harassment or adverse consequences. These ethical practices were integral to safeguarding the participants' rights and well-being throughout the research process.

3 Results and Discussion

This section presents the qualitative data gathered to achieve the study's objectives. The data was sourced from audio-video recordings of teachers working with learners with disabilities at Isulan Central School SPED Center. These recordings were manually transcribed and translated into English. Through the analysis of key statements from each interview transcript, meanings were derived, and recurring patterns were identified. Thematic analysis was then applied to develop and organize the resulting themes.



The Data on figure 1 reflects on the Effects of Group dynamics, Intergroup comparisons and social categorizations to the Teachers' Attitudes Towards Learners with Disabilities.

3.1 Group Dynamics

In special education (SPED) classrooms encompass the interactions, relationships, and behaviors among individuals within a group context. These dynamics are particularly impactful in SPED settings, where students possess diverse needs and abilities, shaping how teachers perceive and navigate their roles. Positive group dynamics, marked by effective communication, collaboration, and mutual support among students, can positively influence teachers' attitudes. When educators witness cooperative interactions and peer support among students with disabilities, they tend to develop an optimistic view of their students' capabilities and feel motivated in their instructional endeavors.

3.1.1 Personal Experience.

Personal experience in teaching special education greatly influences a teacher's approach to inclusive education. It fosters greater empathy, hones their skills, and enhances adaptability, resulting in more effective and compassionate teaching methods. Such experiences are crucial for developing a supportive and inclusive classroom environment for all students. Participant 1 denoted that **"It affects how I view them and how I provide the learning they need to discover their full potential despite their challenges"**. Participant 5 opined that **"How I perceive them and how I tailor their learning experiences to help them unlock their full potential despite their challenges is based on my personal experience."** The way teachers perceive learners with disabilities significantly influences how they support their educational journey and address their unique needs. When they maintain a positive attitude and believe in their capabilities, it shapes their approach to teaching, ensuring that they provide the necessary resources, accommodation, and encouragement for them to succeed. By recognizing their potential and focusing on their strengths, teachers are more inclined to create an inclusive and nurturing learning environment.

In addition, participant 2 mentioned that **"Their teachers believe in their potentials and give them love and care can really help boost the self-esteem of those learners having disabilities."** participant 4 added that **"I believe that recognizing the potential of learners with disabilities and showing them love and care can significantly boost their confidence."** When teachers recognize the potential of learners with disabilities and provide them with love and care, it can greatly enhance these students' self-esteem. Such positive reinforcement makes students feel appreciated and competent, which in turn motivates them to participate more actively in their academic and social pursuits. Creating a supportive and nurturing environment cultivates confidence, resilience, and a sense of belonging, all of which are crucial for their personal and educational development. By affirming their abilities and consistently offering encouragement, teachers can help learners with disabilities build a positive self-image and the drive to achieve their goals despite any obstacles they may encounter. Moreover, participant 3 opined that **"I perceive learners with disabilities as capable individuals who can contribute meaningfully to the learning environment. empathy can enhance understanding and patience."** Viewing learners with disabilities as capable individuals who can significantly contribute to the learning environment. This perspective focuses on acknowledging their strengths and potential instead of merely their challenges. Empathy is vital in this process, as it helps educators understand the unique experiences and viewpoints of these students. By fostering empathy, teachers can improve their patience and support for learners with disabilities. This approach benefits the students by creating a more inclusive and supportive environment and enriches the entire learning community by promoting diversity and understanding.

These affirm the critical impact of educators' positive attitudes on the inclusion and success of students with disabilities, aligning closely with the claims about the importance of viewing these students as capable and valuable. Florian and Hegarty's, (2004), study, "Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education: A Critical Review and Meta-Analysis," demonstrates that teachers who maintain positive attitudes and high expectations towards learners with disabilities are more likely to adopt effective, inclusive teaching strategies. This belief in students' potential, as echoed by Participant 1, shapes how educators support and accommodate their unique needs, ensuring they have the resources to thrive. Additionally, as Participant 2 highlights, positive reinforcement and care from teachers significantly boost the self-esteem and sense of belonging of students with disabilities, motivating them to engage actively in their learning. Participant 3's focus on empathy aligns with the study's findings that understanding students' experiences fosters a nurturing, inclusive environment, enriching the learning community by promoting diversity and respect. These insights underscore that positive educator attitudes are pivotal in cultivating environments where all students, including those with disabilities, can achieve their full potential and contribute meaningfully.

3.1.2 Professional Training

In special education (SPED) this has a significant impact on teachers' attitudes towards students with disabilities. Comprehensive training programs provide educators with a deeper understanding of different disabilities, effective teaching strategies, and the importance of inclusive practices. This increased knowledge often boosts teachers' confidence and self-efficacy, making them feel more capable of addressing the diverse needs of their students. Additionally, training fosters empathy and positive attitudes by offering insights into the challenges faced by students with disabilities and their potential when properly supported. Participant 1 stated that **"I view my learners as capable of achieving academic and personal success. Despite the difficulty in teaching them, I can provide accommodations, supports, and encouragement helping them to explore and experience the learning that they deserve."** From a teacher's perspective, viewing learners with disabilities as capable of achieving academic and personal success is fundamental to effective and inclusive education. It starts with recognizing and believing in their potential despite the challenges they may encounter in their learning journey. This belief forms the foundation for providing the necessary accommodation, support, and encouragement that enable these students to explore and experience meaningful learning opportunities.

Moreover, Participant 2 denoted that **“My struggles contributed to becoming efficient and proficient especially dealing with LWDs.”** Participant 5 denoted that **“How I am able to deliver well today is based on the challenges I encountered in the past, Personally, I find it difficult before, but my struggles in teaching them made me a lot better”** Overcoming challenges in teaching learners with disabilities has been tough, it will help shape professional development. These experiences will enable the teachers to innovate and find new strategies, improving their efficiency. They've also bolstered my skills, making them more resilient and adaptable. Additionally, these will deepen empathy and underscore the critical role of collaboration and advocacy in effectively supporting learners with disabilities. lastly, Participant 4 shared that **“my self-efficacy leads to a positive attitude, viewing challenges as opportunities for growth and development to students with disabilities.”** Self-efficacy cultivates a positive attitude, enabling teachers to see challenges as opportunities for growth and development for students with disabilities. This confidence in their capabilities allows them to approach difficulties with optimism and determination, convinced that they can make a significant impact. By maintaining this mindset, teachers foster a supportive and encouraging environment where students feel valued and capable. This perspective not only aids in overcoming obstacles but also promotes a culture of continuous improvement and resilience, ultimately enhancing the academic and personal development of students.

Research underscores the importance of maintaining a positive outlook when addressing the challenges of teaching learners with disabilities. Sharma, Loreman, and Forlin's study, "Measuring Teacher Efficacy to Implement Inclusive Practices," reveals that educators who view these challenges as opportunities for growth and learning are more resilient, adaptable, and proactive in problem-solving (Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012). This mindset aligns with Participant 1's assertion that recognizing the potential of students with disabilities, despite the difficulties, is key to providing them with meaningful learning opportunities. The study further supports Participant 2's insight that overcoming these challenges not only enhances professional development but also deepens empathy and strengthens teaching skills, making educators more efficient and proficient. Moreover, Participant 3's emphasis on self-efficacy mirrors the study's finding that confidence in one's teaching abilities fosters a positive attitude, enabling teachers to approach difficulties with optimism and determination (Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012). By seeing challenges as avenues for growth, educators create a supportive and encouraging environment where students with disabilities feel valued and capable, ultimately enhancing their academic and personal development.

3.1.3 Resource available

The availability of resources is vital in influencing teachers' attitudes toward students with disabilities (PWD). Access to specialized teaching materials, assistive technologies, and professional development opportunities greatly enhances teachers' capabilities to effectively support learners with disabilities. These resources equip educators with the necessary tools and knowledge to adopt inclusive teaching practices, which can foster more positive attitudes towards disability inclusion. When teachers have sufficient resources, they tend to feel more confident and capable of addressing the diverse needs of their students. This support not only enhances the educational outcomes for learners with disabilities but also promotes a more inclusive and accepting classroom environment, emphasizing the importance of equality and accessibility in education. Participant 1 stated that **“By recognizing and creating an inclusive environment for them and provide appropriate support and materials that will aid their learning needs.”** By recognizing and establishing an inclusive environment for students with disabilities, teachers can make these students feel valued and understood.” This entails offering the right support and resources tailored to their unique learning needs. Such support might involve adaptive technology, personalized instruction, and accessible materials, all aimed at helping them participate fully in their education. This strategy not only tackles their academic challenges but also nurtures a sense of belonging and promotes their overall growth. Ultimately, fostering an inclusive environment enables these students to excel both academically and personally, empowering them to achieve their full potential. Participant 3 affirmed that **“LWDs were/are more cooperative when they feel the authenticity of the care givers or educators around them. They will feel you and learn to accept their differences too.”** Learners with disabilities (LWDs) are generally more cooperative when they perceive genuine care and concern from their caregivers or educators. When educators show authentic empathy and support, LWDs feel valued and understood, which helps build trust. This trust creates a safe and respectful learning environment, making students more willing to engage in educational activities and accept their differences. Participant 4 affirmed that **“Positive interactions with individuals with disabilities foster empathy, understanding, and respect”** Positive interactions with individuals with disabilities are essential for nurturing empathy, understanding, and respect. Engaging positively with people who have disabilities enables meaningful exchanges that dismantle stereotypes and misunderstandings. These interactions offer chances to appreciate the distinctive experiences and viewpoints of individuals with disabilities, fostering empathy through the ability to empathize with their perspectives. Participant 2 stated that **“The attitude of the teachers in our school has been always restricted to the resources offered to us.”** The teachers' attitudes or approaches in the school are shaped or limited by the resources available to them. In other words, their ability to support and teach effectively may depend heavily on the tools, materials, and support provided by the school or system.

Creating a nurturing and inclusive educational atmosphere is essential for the growth and success of all students, especially those with disabilities. Research by de Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert, titled "Attitudes of Parents and Teachers Towards Inclusive Education: A Review of the Literature," supports this approach by demonstrating that inclusive environments significantly reduce barriers, lessen stigma, and foster positive relationships among teachers, students, and peers (de Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011). The study highlights that when teachers recognize and address the unique needs of learners with disabilities through appropriate support and resources, these students feel valued and understood. This affirmation, as Participant 1 noted, involves adaptive technology and personalized instruction, which are crucial for their full participation and growth. Moreover, Participant 2's observation that learners with disabilities are more cooperative when they sense genuine care from educators aligns with the study's findings that authentic empathy and support build trust, leading to greater engagement and acceptance of their differences. Finally, Participant 3's emphasis on positive interactions fostering empathy and respect is corroborated by the study, which reveals that such interactions are key to breaking down stereotypes and promoting mutual understanding and respect. By nurturing an inclusive environment, teachers empower all students to achieve their full potential and contribute positively to the learning community.

3.2 Intergroup Comparisons

Within teaching attitudes towards learners with disabilities (LWDs), this involves evaluating and contrasting student groups based on abilities, behaviors, or characteristics, influencing how teachers perceive and interact with LWDs. Positive comparisons occur when educators acknowledge and emphasize the strengths and accomplishments of LWDs relative to their peers, fostering an inclusive classroom atmosphere. This approach encourages support and highlights the abilities of LWDs, promoting a positive environment conducive to their learning and growth.

3.2.1 Prioritizing Diversity

Prioritizing diversity is essential in influencing teachers' attitudes towards learners with disabilities (LWDs). Highlighting diversity helps teachers appreciate and recognize the unique strengths and perspectives each student contributes to the classroom. This understanding can lead to a more inclusive teaching approach, where educators are more inclined to modify their methods to accommodate the diverse needs of all students. By emphasizing diversity, teachers are more likely to see differences as benefits rather than obstacles, promoting a positive and accepting attitude towards LWDs. participant 1 uttered that **"Theories matter, we learned to recognize and understand individuality."** understanding theories in special education enables educators to advocate for inclusive practices and policies that support the diverse needs of students with disabilities. It empowers them to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions about disability and promote environments where all students are valued and included. The foundational understanding of how to recognize and respond to the individuality of students with disabilities, fostering a more equitable and supportive educational experience for all learners. Participant 4 expressed that **"I always believe that society needs to be enlightened what special education is."** This entails that They see a pressing need for greater awareness and understanding of the principles, goals, and practices of special education among the public. This includes recognizing the diverse needs and potential of learners with disabilities, the importance of inclusive educational environments, and the various support systems in place to help these students succeed. By educating society about special education, they hope to foster empathy, reduce stigma, and promote a more inclusive and supportive community for all individuals, regardless of their abilities.

Acknowledging and valuing the unique traits, strengths, and needs of each student with disabilities is fundamental in special education. This individualized approach transcends mere labeling, emphasizing the importance of customized teaching methods and support plans tailored to each student's specific needs and preferences. A study by Salend and Garrick Duhaney, titled "The Impact of Inclusion on Students With and Without Disabilities and Their Educators," supports these principles by highlighting the benefits of personalized and inclusive educational strategies (Salend & Garrick Duhaney, 1999). The study reveals that when educators focus on the individuality of students with disabilities—appreciating their distinct personalities, learning styles, and capabilities—these students experience enhanced personal growth and achievement. Participant 1's call for greater societal awareness about special education resonates with the study's findings, which emphasize the importance of educating the public to foster empathy, reduce stigma, and promote inclusivity. Participant 4's remark on the importance of theories in recognizing and understanding individuality aligns with the study's conclusion that theoretical frameworks in special education empower educators to advocate for inclusive practices and challenge misconceptions about disability. By focusing on each student's unique strengths and obstacles, educators can create a more equitable and supportive learning environment that benefits all learners.

Empathy and support play critical roles in achieving favorable outcomes in special education, fostering an environment where students with disabilities feel validated, included, and capable of reaching their full potential. A study by Peer and Reid, titled "Special Needs and Inclusive Education: Effective Support for Learning," underscores the significance of empathy and personal support in promoting both academic and socio-emotional growth among students with disabilities (Peer & Reid, 2016). The study illustrates how positive interactions and behaviors from students with disabilities inspire educators to respond with empathy and support. When teachers observe these students' efforts, progress, and resilience, it naturally cultivates a sense of empathy, driving educators to understand their unique challenges and provide tailored support. This nurturing approach not only enhances academic performance but also fosters social and emotional development and boosts self-confidence. Creating such a supportive and inclusive environment ensures that every student, regardless of their abilities, feels valued and can thrive. By prioritizing empathy and individualized support, educators create a foundation for continuous growth and success for all learners.

3.2 2 Inclusion in lesson planning

These are crucial factors that lead to favorable results in special education. They empower students by validating their experiences and nurturing a feeling of belonging within the school community. This approach not only boosts academic performance but also encourages social and emotional growth and enhances self-assurance among students with disabilities. Ultimately, empathy and support form the bedrock of an environment where every student, irrespective of their capabilities, can achieve their utmost potential. Participant 3 shared that **"Their positive behaviors make me empathetic, and supportive to them."** Their positive actions serve as an inspiration, prompting the educator to respond with empathy and support. Observing students with disabilities demonstrate positivity, whether in their efforts, progress, or resilience, naturally evokes a sense of empathy. This empathy motivates the educator to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges these students face and to offer the appropriate support required for their success. Creating a nurturing environment becomes the goal, aimed at fostering ongoing growth and development among these students, guiding them through their educational path with assurance and respect.

Inclusive lesson planning in special education (SPED) integrates various theories and research to ensure that educational practices effectively meet the needs of diverse learners. One prominent theoretical framework, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), emphasizes the creation of flexible lesson plans that cater to different learning styles and abilities (Rose & Meyer, 2002). UDL encourages educators to provide multiple ways for students with disabilities to access and engage with educational content through varied representation, engagement, and expression methods. The application of Constructivist Theory in SPED lesson planning focuses on active learning, where students build their understanding through hands-on activities and collaborative learning experiences (Piaget, 1972). By incorporating constructivist principles into their plans, educators can design meaningful learning opportunities tailored to the unique learning needs of students with disabilities. Research supports the effectiveness of these strategies. For example, studies have demonstrated that implementing UDL principles enhances academic outcomes and boosts engagement among students with disabilities (McGuire, Scott, & Shaw, 2006). Similarly, using constructivist approaches in SPED lesson planning has been shown to improve students' problem-solving abilities and deepen their comprehension of subjects (Steffe & Gale, 1995).

3.2 3 Emphasizing differentiated instruction

When teachers actively employ differentiated instruction, they become more attuned to the unique needs of each student, including those with disabilities. This approach fosters a sense of competence and confidence in teachers, as they feel better equipped to address diverse learning needs effectively. As a result, teachers who prioritize differentiated instruction often develop more positive and supportive attitudes towards learners with disabilities, viewing their individual challenges as opportunities for tailored teaching rather than insurmountable obstacles. Participant 2 expressed that **"Technology in teaching learners with disability can be very useful as a support and tool for better learning and aid some difficulties to provide a learning experience that they need."** Technology plays a crucial role in education for learners with disabilities, serving as a valuable tool to address diverse learning challenges and provide personalized educational experiences. It supports the creation of inclusive learning environments by offering adaptive technologies like assistive devices, specialized software, and digital platforms. These tools improve access to educational materials, enhancing engagement and interactivity for students with disabilities. Moreover, technology enables educators to tailor learning experiences to individual needs, adapting materials and methods based on unique learning styles and abilities. Ultimately, technology empowers students with disabilities to succeed academically and actively participate in their educational journey.

Participant 5 added that **“I do look forward to becoming more “techy savvy” to be able to assist the learners with the use of technology and different instructions which will strengthen me and my learners.”** By improving their proficiency with technology, teachers can provide more effective support to learners, particularly those with disabilities. This enhancement will enable them to leverage technological tools and resources that cater to diverse learning needs, thereby enhancing engagement and learning outcomes. Their commitment to becoming more tech-savvy reflects a proactive approach to professional development, ensuring they can adapt teaching methods and incorporate innovative solutions that benefit their students' educational journeys.

Creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment for students with disabilities through advanced technologies is supported by research emphasizing their role in enhancing accessibility, communication, and educational outcomes. The study "Technology and Its Impact on Special Education" by Burgstahler explores how technology aids in overcoming barriers and supporting diverse learning needs (Burgstahler, 2003). This research underscores Participant 2's observation that advanced technologies provide crucial support by offering tailored solutions and learning opportunities to address difficulties faced by learners with disabilities. Moreover, Participant 2's experience of technology easing communication stresses aligns with the study's findings that assistive communication devices and interactive platforms enhance interactions, making communication more effective and meaningful. Participant 3's ability to enhance communication and foster inclusivity through technology resonates with the study's conclusion that adaptive strategies improve educational environments by facilitating clearer understanding and better support for students' unique needs. By integrating technology effectively, educators can create environments where all students feel valued and supported, promoting their academic, social, and emotional growth.

3.2.4 Cultivating Respect

Fostering respect for learners with disabilities among teachers promotes collaborative and positive interactions, fostering a sense of belonging and confidence among students. This emphasis on respect encourages educators to empathize with and appreciate the unique strengths and challenges of each student, motivating them to tailor their teaching methods effectively. By prioritizing respect, teachers not only enhance their attitudes towards learners with disabilities but also play a crucial role in establishing an inclusive educational environment. In such an environment, all students can flourish academically and socially, benefiting from supportive and accommodating learning experiences that cater to their individual needs. Participant 4 denoted that **“I firmly believe that it can enhance awareness, support inclusion, and empower learners with disabilities.”** The statement expresses a strong belief in the transformative potential of technology across multiple dimensions. It emphasizes that technology can increase awareness and understanding of disabilities and the associated challenges.

The concept of disability shifts from being seen merely as an individual's impairment to a perspective that identifies societal barriers as the primary obstacles to full participation, respect, and inclusion. In this framework, technology plays a crucial role in breaking down these barriers by offering accessible learning materials, adaptive devices, and assistive technologies. These tools empower individuals with disabilities to fully engage in educational activities and diverse experiences. Moreover, technology fosters personalized learning environments that cater to specific needs, provides adaptive tools that enhance accessibility, and opens avenues for independence and self-expression. Overall, technology's impact extends beyond facilitating inclusion; it significantly contributes to advancing equity and broadening opportunities for individuals with disabilities (Oliver, 1996).

3.2.5 Implementing universal design for learning

UDL encourages educators to proactively design curriculum and instruction that accommodates the diverse needs of all students, including those with disabilities, from the outset. By integrating UDL principles, teachers can create flexible learning environments that provide multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression. This approach not only enhances accessibility but also fosters a sense of empowerment among LWDs, as they are supported in learning in ways that suit their individual strengths and preferences. Participant 1 stated that **“we can improve our strategies and techniques in providing quality education with our students. We can integrate new concepts and ideas where teaching learning can be very exciting in our learners with special needs.”** Improving strategies and techniques in providing quality education for students, particularly those with special needs, involves integrating new concepts and ideas that make the teaching and learning process engaging and effective. By adopting innovative approaches tailored to the unique needs of students with disabilities, educators can create a stimulating educational environment. This approach not only enhances the educational experience but also fosters enthusiasm and participation among learners with special needs, ensuring their educational journey is fulfilling and supportive.

The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) promotes the development of adaptable teaching environments and materials that cater to the diverse learning needs of all students, including those with disabilities. Based on UDL

principles, offering various ways to present information, engage students, and allow them to express themselves enables learners to interact with educational content according to their unique learning styles and capabilities (Rose & Meyer, 2002). Social Cognitive Theory, proposed by Bandura (1986), emphasizes how social influences, personal experiences, and environmental factors shape learning and behavior. In the context of equal access in special education (SPED), this theory suggests that fostering inclusive and supportive learning environments can boost students' self-confidence, motivation, and educational achievements. By providing accessible opportunities for students to observe, model, and practice skills, educators can enhance learning outcomes within inclusive educational settings.

3.2 6 Supportive Interaction

Entails to being empathetic, supportive, and adaptable to the individual needs and challenges of each student is crucial. Patience ensures educators offer the time and support necessary for students to learn at their own speed, while understanding helps them comprehend each learner's unique circumstances and perspectives. These attributes create a positive learning atmosphere where students feel appreciated, respected, and motivated to overcome challenges, thereby improving their educational journey and personal development. Participant 2 shared that **"I became more understanding and patient."** This involves developing a deeper awareness and tolerance for the diverse needs and challenges of students with disabilities. It requires educators to empathize with their students' experiences, acknowledge their individual differences, and appreciate the varying paces at which they learn and grow. Patience in SPED means giving students the time and support they need to master skills and concepts, allowing for incremental progress and celebrating achievements, no matter how small. Understanding and patience together create a supportive environment where students feel valued, respected, and empowered to reach their full potential despite obstacles.

Understanding, empathy, and patience are essential qualities in fostering a positive and inclusive learning environment for students with disabilities. The study "Empathy, Caring, and Concern: Keys to Building Effective Relationships in Inclusive Settings" by Perner and colleagues explores how these attributes contribute to creating supportive educational environments (Perner et al., 2017). The study highlights that empathy enables educators to understand and appreciate the unique circumstances and perspectives of students with disabilities, fostering deeper connections and trust. Participant 2's development of understanding and patience resonates with the study's findings that these qualities are crucial in accommodating diverse learning needs and supporting incremental progress in special education. Moreover, Participant 3's experience of enhancing empathy and skills through patience underscores how these attributes promote effective support and contribute to a positive learning atmosphere. By cultivating empathy, patience, and understanding, educators can create environments where students feel valued, respected, and motivated to overcome challenges, ultimately enhancing their educational and personal development.

3.2 7 Ensure that all Students have equal access

Prioritizing equal access fosters a collaborative and supportive educational atmosphere where every student, irrespective of their abilities, can excel academically and socially. Teachers are pivotal in championing inclusive practices and ensuring that learners with disabilities (LWDs) receive the essential resources and assistance needed for their success. This dedication to equal access not only improves educational achievements for LWDs but also cultivates a school environment that is fair and inclusive, where all students feel appreciated and included. participant 3 told that "Having equal access, It fosters a deeper understanding, enhances empathy, and equips me with the skills needed to patiently provide effective support." fostering a deeper understanding and practicing empathy and patience in special education enables educators to effectively support students in achieving their academic and personal goals, promoting a positive and inclusive learning environment for all.

Creating inclusive and supportive learning environments that enable all students, including those with disabilities, to excel academically, socially, and emotionally is a cornerstone of effective educational practices. The study "Inclusive Education in the United States: Theory and Practice" by Salend examines how inclusive approaches ensure fair educational experiences and help students with disabilities achieve their full potential (Salend, 2008). Participant 3's emphasis on integrating new concepts and innovative teaching strategies aligns with the study's findings that tailored approaches enhance engagement and effectiveness in special education. By adapting instructional methods to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities, educators foster a stimulating learning environment that promotes enthusiasm and active participation. This approach not only enriches the educational experience but also supports the overall development and success of learners with special needs.

3.3 Social categorizations

Social categorizations involve grouping individuals based on common characteristics, affecting how teachers perceive and engage with learners with disabilities (LWDs). When teachers categorize students according to their disabilities, it shapes their attitudes and expectations. Positive social categorizations occur when teachers see LWDs as capable learners who merit support and inclusion. This perspective fosters a supportive classroom environment where teachers actively accommodate diverse needs and foster positive relationships.

3.3.1 Influence by Beliefs

Educators can create an inclusive and supportive learning environment where students with disabilities can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. This approach not only benefits individual students but also enriches the educational experience for the entire school community. Participant 1 extrapolated that **“Advanced technologies will aid the needs of the learners based on their difficulties. It provides access, support, and learning opportunities to overcome their difficulties.”** Advanced technologies in education offer crucial support by providing tailored solutions to address the specific challenges faced by learners. These technologies enhance accessibility to educational resources, provide personalized support, and create learning opportunities that cater to individual needs. Participant 2 added that **“Tasks became easy. Less stressful during challenging times. Technology is a great aid when it comes to communicating with the children.”** When it comes to communicating with children, especially those with disabilities, technology serves as an invaluable aid. Assistive communication devices, specialized software, and interactive platforms enhance the ability to connect with students, making interactions more effective and meaningful. These tools help bridge communication gaps, allowing for clearer understanding and better support of each student's unique needs. Participant 5 told that **“I am able to enhance communication with them which is difficult. I am able to foster a more inclusive and supportive educational environment.”** By utilizing technology and adaptive strategies, the educator can enhance communication with students, making it easier to connect despite the challenges. This improved communication allows the educator to better understand the students' needs and provide appropriate support. As a result, the educator can foster a more inclusive and supportive educational environment where every student feels valued and understood. This approach not only facilitates learning but also promotes a sense of belonging and encouragement, helping all students to thrive academically and socially.

Creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment for students with disabilities through advanced technologies is supported by research emphasizing their role in enhancing accessibility, communication, and educational outcomes. The study "Technology and Its Impact on Special Education" by Burgstahler explores how technology aids in overcoming barriers and supporting diverse learning needs (Burgstahler, 2003). This research underscores Participant's observation that advanced technologies provide crucial support by offering tailored solutions and learning opportunities to address difficulties faced by learners with disabilities. Moreover, Participant 2's experience of technology easing communication stresses aligns with the study's findings that assistive communication devices and interactive platforms enhance interactions, making communication more effective and meaningful. Participant 3's ability to enhance communication and foster inclusivity through technology resonates with the study's conclusion that adaptive strategies improve educational environments by facilitating clearer understanding and better support for students' unique needs. By integrating technology effectively, educators can create environments where all students feel valued and supported, promoting their academic, social, and emotional growth.

3.3.2 Influence by Professional Experience

This can be attained through personalized teaching methods, assistive technologies, inclusive strategies, continuous professional growth, collaborative support networks, promoting a positive school environment, and employing data-driven decision-making. These strategies aim to boost student participation, academic success, social inclusion, and overall wellness, ensuring that students with disabilities receive comprehensive support for their academic and personal development. Participant 3 shared that **“Policies should be also aligned to the needs of our learners with special needs so the school can provide proper support and accommodation to our learners.”** Policies must align with the needs of learners with special needs to ensure schools can offer the right support and accommodations. Such policies enable individualized education plans, access to assistive technologies, and specialized teacher training, fostering an inclusive environment that promotes academic and personal growth for all students. Participant 4 affirmed that **“If the policy benefits in favor to those learners with disabilities the intervention will come easy to the part of the SPED and receiving teachers and the learners.”** When policies benefit learners with disabilities, interventions are easier for both SPED and general education teachers. Clear guidelines and resources ensure teachers have the tools they need, leading to smoother collaboration and consistent support. This creates an environment where interventions are seamlessly integrated, improving the educational experience and outcomes for students with disabilities. and

participant 5 uttered that **“School policies and culture foster positive perceptions, leading to better educational and social outcomes for these learners.”** School policies and culture that promote inclusion and understanding lead to better outcomes for learners with disabilities. By fostering a positive environment that values diversity, students feel more accepted and supported, which boosts their self-esteem, encourages participation, and improves both academic and social success. This supportive atmosphere helps learners with disabilities thrive and reach their full potential.

Creating an environment conducive to the academic and personal development of students with disabilities through effective policies, inclusive practices, and supportive school cultures is well-supported in educational research. The study "Policy Implications of Inclusive Education for Students with Learning Disabilities" by Akhurst explores how policies aligned with the needs of learners with disabilities facilitate inclusive educational environments and enhance academic and social outcomes (Akhurst, 2015). This research underscores Participant 1's perspective that policies must accommodate diverse learner needs, ensuring access to necessary supports like assistive technologies and specialized teacher training. Participant 2's observation that beneficial policies streamline interventions for SPED and general education teachers aligns with the study's findings that clear guidelines and resources improve collaboration and support for students with disabilities. Moreover, Participant 3's assertion that positive school policies and culture lead to better outcomes resonates with the study's conclusion that inclusive policies foster a supportive environment, promoting acceptance, participation, and improved educational and social success for all students. By implementing effective policies and cultivating a positive school culture, educators can ensure comprehensive support for students with disabilities, enabling them to thrive academically and socially.

3.3.3 Influence by Values

This entails creating an inclusive environment where students with disabilities feel valued, integrated, and respected within the educational community. It goes beyond tolerance to foster genuine inclusion and support. This involves acknowledging and respecting each student's unique abilities, challenges, and viewpoints, irrespective of their disabilities. By promoting empathy, understanding, and equity, educators aim to cultivate a culture where all students feel safe, appreciated, and empowered to engage fully in their academic and social endeavors. Ultimately, this acceptance improves educational outcomes for students with disabilities and promotes a more compassionate and inclusive school environment. First, participant 1 asserted that **“Through giving proper support and providing them a safe environment where they are accepted and valued as learners”** this pertains to Creating a supportive and inclusive environment for learners with disabilities involves providing tailored support and ensuring they feel valued and respected. This approach, which includes individualized instruction and assistive technologies, helps address their specific needs, fostering engagement, confidence, and a sense of belonging. These factors contribute to improved academic and personal outcomes for these students. In addition, Participant 2 expounded that **“Every individual has different needs and pacing that needs to be accepted and considered, proper intervention and accommodation are necessary.”** This statement emphasizes the importance of recognizing and accommodating the diverse needs of all students, particularly those with disabilities, in educational settings. It highlights the necessity of personalized interventions and supports, such as individualized education plans (IEPs) and assistive technologies, to ensure that every student can thrive academically and socially. By embracing this inclusive approach, educators create a supportive and equitable learning environment where each student's unique strengths and challenges are respected, fostering a positive atmosphere conducive to learning and personal growth. Lastly, participant 4 annotated that “if they are mainstreamed to the regular class and they are accepted by their teachers, classmates and other parent regardless of their disabilities, inclusiveness can really a good impact to them.” When students with disabilities are mainstreamed into regular classes and accepted by their teachers, classmates, and parents regardless of their disabilities, inclusiveness can have a profoundly positive impact on them. Acceptance fosters a sense of belonging and support, which are essential for their emotional well-being and academic success. It encourages social interaction, promotes self-confidence, and helps develop empathy among peers. Inclusive environments not only enhance educational outcomes but also contribute to the overall social and emotional development of students with disabilities, empowering them to thrive alongside their peers.

An inclusive and supportive environment where students with disabilities feel valued and respected within the educational community is crucial for their academic and social success. The study "Promoting Inclusive Practices for Students with Disabilities: The Role of School Culture and Leadership" by Odom and colleagues examines how inclusive school cultures and supportive leadership contribute to positive outcomes for students with disabilities (Odom et al., 2015). This research underscores Participant 1's emphasis on providing tailored support and a safe environment to foster engagement and belonging. It highlights that individualized instruction and assistive

technologies are essential in addressing specific needs, promoting confidence, and improving academic and personal outcomes for students with disabilities. Participant 2's assertion regarding the necessity of personalized interventions and accommodations aligns with the study's findings that recognizing and accommodating diverse needs enhance educational environments and support student success. Moreover, Participant 3's observation that acceptance and inclusion in mainstream settings positively impact students with disabilities resonates with the study's conclusion that inclusive environments foster belonging, social interaction, and overall well-being. By cultivating empathy, understanding, and equity, educators can create environments where all students, regardless of disabilities, thrive academically and socially.

4. Conclusion

This study explored the attitudes of teachers towards learners with disabilities, particularly within the context of the transition program at Isulan Central School SPED Center. By employing a qualitative approach, the research provided valuable insights into the perspectives of educators working with students with disabilities. The findings reveal that teachers' attitudes are shaped by their knowledge, available resources, and the level of institutional and community support they receive. Positive attitudes were closely linked to professional development opportunities, access to teaching materials, and supportive school environments. Teachers emphasized the importance of empathy, patience, and adaptability in fostering inclusive classrooms where learners with disabilities can thrive. However, the study also identified significant challenges, including a lack of specialized training, inadequate resources, and the need for stronger collaboration among stakeholders. Despite these obstacles, teachers demonstrated resilience and a commitment to addressing the unique needs of their students by employing creative strategies and advocating for inclusive practices. This research underscores the importance of providing teachers with continuous professional development, adequate resources, and a supportive environment to enhance their capacity to teach learners with disabilities effectively. Moreover, fostering a culture of inclusivity requires collective efforts from educators, administrators, policymakers, and the broader community. Future research should focus on evaluating the long-term impact of teacher attitudes on the academic and social outcomes of learners with disabilities. Additionally, further studies could explore the role of cultural and societal influences on teachers' perceptions and the effectiveness of targeted interventions to promote inclusive education.

5. Recommendations

The **Department of Education** should offer comprehensive training programs covering a wide range of topics related to special education. These programs should focus on understanding various types of disabilities, identifying individualized learning profiles, and implementing effective instructional strategies and interventions. By deepening educators' understanding of disabilities and the challenges they present, teachers can adapt their teaching methods and accommodations to better support students with intellectual disabilities. Additionally, **School administrations** should organize school-based seminars, workshops, or Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions that enhance teachers' strategies for addressing the challenges faced by students in the transition program. As key figures in creating inclusive environments, teachers need professional development opportunities that increase awareness of diverse learning needs and promote inclusive spaces within schools to ensure a supportive learning experience for students with disabilities. **Local Government Units (LGUs)** should develop specialized support services for learners with disabilities, such as accessible assessment programs, community initiatives, and the provision of necessary teaching materials. LGUs can also play a role in reducing stigma surrounding disabilities by raising community awareness and partnering with advocacy groups to create targeted programs. Finally, **Future researchers** should explore the long-term outcomes of individuals with disabilities in Special Needs Education programs, including the factors influencing their ongoing support needs. Researchers should also investigate how cultural influences impact teaching practices and evaluate the effectiveness of various interventions and support programs to offer evidence-based recommendations.

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