



Strategies in Dealing with Disruptive Behavior of Learners with Special Education Needs

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ABSTRACT:

This descriptive comparative study examined behavioral management strategies used by special education (SPED) and general teachers to address disruptive behaviors among learners with special needs. Surveys were distributed to a purposive sample of 110 SPED and general teachers from three public schools. The majority of teachers were female, aged 27-50 with 6-10 years' experience and master's degrees. SPED teachers addressed disabilities including intellectual, autism, Down syndrome, and ADHD, while general teachers had students with ADHD, intellectual disabilities, and autism. Both teacher groups commonly used positive reinforcement like praise and rewards as well as behavior modification through coaching and routines. Independent t-tests found SPED teachers reported significantly greater use of positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, and behavior modification compared to general teachers. However, both groups demonstrated comparable emphasis on proactively addressing behaviors through customized support instead of solely consequences. The findings highlighted the need for ongoing professional development and a matrix-type Behavior Management Strategies Enhancement Plan.

INTRODUCTION:

Educators working in inclusive classrooms face the ongoing challenge of managing disruptive behaviors exhibited by some learners with special educational needs (LSENs) (Autry, 2021). With policies promoting wider inclusion, both special education and general teachers must effectively address conduct issues to support students' diverse needs. However, addressing disruptions can test even the most experienced teachers (Gonsier-Gerdin, 2021).

Disruptions in the classroom can often arise from intrinsic factors related to students' disabilities, and without evidence-based intervention, may escalate and compromise the learning environment (Salem, 2021; Gagnon et al., 2020). To minimize disruptions and maximize student achievement, teachers need effective

behavioral support strategies that are tailored to meet the individual needs and profiles of each student (Gulliford & Miller, 2023).

It is worth emphasizing the importance of implementing preventative and relationship-focused approaches through frameworks like positive behavior support by Horner & Sugai (1980s). Promising strategies include applied behavior analysis, individualized behavior plans, modifying the classroom environment, and reinforcing appropriate conduct (Zajda, 2023; Alam et al., 2022; Farooqui et al., 2023). However, there may be gaps between the recommended practices and how they are applied in real-world classrooms across different school settings. Additional support may be needed to help teachers integrate evidence-based methods that have been shown to improve student outcomes and



foster positive learning environments for all (Fisher, 2023).

This study was grounded in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) by Horner & Sugai, (1980s), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) by Beck (1960s), and Social Learning Theory (SLT) by Bandura, (1977) as evidence-based frameworks for developing effective strategies to address disruptive behaviors among learners with special educational needs. These theories are complemented by key Philippine laws and policies (RA9442 amended Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, RA11650 Inclusive Education Act, RA10533 Enhanced Basic Education Act, and DepEd DO 40 s2012 DepEd Child Protection Policy) that mandate support and inclusion for learners with special needs.

The present study aims to explore the array of behavior management strategies currently employed by special education and general teachers in three Philippine public schools to address disruptive behaviors exhibited by LSEs. In this study, the researchers aim to contribute

to a wide array of literature by illuminating current realities from teachers' perspectives to advance more student-centered, evidence-based strategies shown to foster success for LSEs in public schools. Findings will identify exemplary applications and opportunities to strengthen teacher training and support in strategically dealing with disruptions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

Participants

A total of 110 teachers from three public schools participated in the study (Table 1). Schools included Malitbog Central School (n=25, 22.73%), Mandaue City SPED Center High School (n=55, 50%) and Talamban Elementary School (n=30, 27.27%). Participants comprised 34 special education teachers (30.91%) and 76 general education teachers (69.09%). The selection criteria aimed to capture diverse viewpoints across learning environments.

Table 1
Distribution of the Respondents

Names of Schools	SPED Teachers		General Education Teachers		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Malitbog Central School	2	1.82	23	20.91	25	22.73
Mandaue City SPED Center High School	30	27.27	25	22.73	55	50
Talamban Elementary School	2	1.82	28	25.45	30	27.27
Total	34	30.91	76	69.09	110	100

Instrument

A semi-structured questionnaire was adapted from Pesonen (2016) and Dobmeier and Moran (2008) to collect data on teacher profiles, behavior management strategy usage levels and differences between groups. The instrument consisted of two parts with profile questions and 26 Likert scale items for special education and general teachers respectively. A 5-point response scale ensured consistency and simplicity. The

questionnaire was validated through expert review prior to distribution.

Procedure

Approval was obtained from school principals before data collection. Teachers provided informed consent and anonymously completed hard copy questionnaires during allotted time. Completed surveys underwent encoding and analysis using a statistical software after screening for errors. Descriptive and inferential statistics characterized participant demographics and strategy use



levels. Independent t-tests identified differences between teacher groups. The research followed ethical standards to systematically collect meaningful data addressing objectives.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS:

To analyze the data collected from the teacher survey questionnaires, a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques was employed. First, the survey response data was coded and input to statistical software for organization and screening. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were computed to characterize the demographic profiles of participating teachers as well as their self-reported levels of using different behavior management strategies. This allowed for a summarized description of the key characteristics of the teacher sample and the main variables of interest.

Independent t-tests were then conducted to compare strategy usage between special education and general teachers, thereby identifying any significant differences between the two teacher groups. This inferential analysis examined if teacher type (special education or general) had an association with variation in instructional approach. All statistical procedures involved analyses of strategies related to positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, punishment, and behavior modification specifically for addressing disruptive behaviors among learners with special needs.

By rigorously applying both descriptive and inferential quantitative methods, objective insights into teacher perspectives and relationships among variables could be obtained from the 5-point Likert scale survey. Patterns in the results provided meaningful conclusions about the diverse approaches employed by teachers and how effectively disruptions are managed.

RESULTS:

The teachers' survey responses were coded and analyzed using a statistical software. This section presents the findings according to the study's research questions. Objective analysis of quantitative survey data provided key insights into teacher-reported approaches for managing disruptive behaviors among learners with special educational needs. Rigorous descriptive and inferential statistical techniques systematically addressed the research questions while objectively characterizing the prominent strategies utilized across the sampled teachers. Interpretation of the results helped

illuminate realities in these inclusive classrooms to guide evidence-based enhancements strengthening support for learners exhibiting behavior issues.

Profile of the Respondents

The results of the study provided insights into the profile of SPED and general education teachers in the three public schools. In terms of demographics, the typical SPED teacher was found to have been most likely a woman between the ages of 27-50, with very few male teachers represented in the sample. This aligned with previous research showing an overrepresentation of female teachers, particularly in younger age groups (Pavlidou et al., 2022; Avendano and Cho, 2020). Younger females may have been at greater risk of burnout without sufficient support. Mentoring programs could have helped encourage more diversity in the profession while supporting new teachers (Kozleski, 2020).

When examining qualifications, the data revealed that the vast majority of both SPED and general teachers had pursued postgraduate education beyond their bachelor's degree through master's level credits or degrees. Over 88% of SPED teachers and around 96% of general teachers reported having graduate-level training or higher. This demonstrated a strong commitment to ongoing professional development among the teaching staff. Research indicated that higher qualifications, especially at the graduate level, could have positively impacted job satisfaction and instructional effectiveness (Ramani et al., 2022; Toropova et al., 2021).

In terms of experience, both SPED and general education samples represented a balanced mix of career stages, ranging from relatively new teachers to seasoned veterans. However, the groups trended more towards moderate to long-term careers comprising 6 years or more of service. Experienced teachers provided valuable mentoring opportunities while those new to the profession contributed fresh perspectives. Continuous professional development was important for supporting teachers' growth at all stages. Work experience had also been tied to overall job satisfaction (Almeda San Jose & Phtiaka, 2022; Karlberg and Bezzina, 2022).

When examining the types of disabilities encountered, SPED teachers primarily dealt with intellectual disabilities, autism, Down syndrome, and ADHD among their students. General education teachers reported having experience mainly with ADHD, intellectual disabilities, and autism among students with IEPs. This implied teachers needed training on a variety of special



education needs (Duda, 2020). Additional support for general education teachers was also warranted given they typically lacked specialized disability training (Francisco, 2020). Investing in comprehensive teacher preparation fostered positive inclusive learning environments for diverse learners (Arcangeli et al., 2020).

Extent of utilization of different strategies in dealing with the disruptive behavior of LSENs

Positive reinforcement and behavior modification strategies were highly utilized by both special education and general education teachers in addressing disruptive LSEN behaviors, achieving weighted mean scores above 4 (Fernandes et al., 2021; Arboiz, 2022). Specifically, special education teachers reported mean usage ratings of 4.52 for positive reinforcement strategies and 4.50 for behavior modification (Arboiz, 2022). General education teachers' mean ratings were 4.66 for positive reinforcement and 4.39 for behavior modification. The positive reinforcement strategies most commonly employed included praising appropriate conduct, using rewards such as stickers, encouraging prosocial skills development, and delivering behavior-specific feedback.

Punishment approaches were adopted to a moderate degree, with special education and general education teachers recording mean scores of 3.91 and 4.08 respectively. Negative reinforcement was utilized moderately by general education teachers (mean 2.93) and more extensively by special education teachers (mean 3.27).

While positive and instructive methods like reinforcement and modification were highly relied on, both teacher groups also integrated consequence-based techniques including punishment and negative reinforcement, albeit to a lesser extent. A balanced, customized multi-pronged approach was thus indicated (Dioso et al., 2022; Healzer, 2022).

Significant differences between the utilization of instructional strategies by SPED and general education

Targeted mentorship programs could help address this issue by empowering new, younger female teachers with effective coping strategies, as recommended by Kozleski (2020). Mentoring has been shown to support teachers in developing mechanisms to manage burnout. Such programs may also encourage greater diversity by attracting more males to enter and remain in the field during important early career years. This could

teachers in dealing with disruptive behavior among LSEN students

Statistical analysis via t-test revealed significant differences between the teacher groups in their reported use of several strategies. Specifically, SPED teachers reported significantly higher use of positive reinforcement strategies (mean of 36.18) (Laird, 2023) compared to general teachers (mean of 37.25). SPED teachers also reported significantly higher use of behavior modification strategies (mean of 31.88) (Merle et al., 2022) than general teachers (mean of 33.57). Additionally, SPED teachers reported significantly higher use of negative reinforcement approaches (mean of 19.62) (Schieltz et al., 2020) than general teachers (mean of 17.55). However, no significant difference was found between the teachers in their reported use of punishment strategies, with means of 19.56 for SPED teachers and 20.42 for general teachers. This suggests SPED teachers placed relatively greater emphasis on positive and negative reinforcement, while relying similarly on punishment strategies at means of 19.56 and 20.42, respectively (Twardawski et al., 2020).

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION:

Discussion

Profile of the Respondents-SPED Teachers

Age and Gender

The age and gender distribution of special education teachers presented in Table 2 provides insights when considered alongside previous research. The table shows a clear overrepresentation of younger female teachers, particularly in the 27-34 age group. This gender imbalance within younger teachers is an important consideration based on Pavlidou et al.'s (2022) findings that burnout levels tend to be higher among younger teachers and females. Younger female teachers represented the largest subset in the current sample, putting them at increased risk of burnout without adequate support.

simultaneously improve both representation and retention outcomes over the long term.

The underrepresentation of males seen across all age groups in Table 2 aligns with concerns raised by Avendano and Cho (2020) regarding how gender disparities limit diversity within the teaching workforce. A more balanced profile may be achievable by understanding the factors, like supportive leadership and development opportunities, that enhance retention based



on their research. With informed policy changes focusing on leadership, work environments and professional growth at different career stages, it may be possible to establish a more gender-balanced age distribution within special education teaching over time.

Highest Educational Attainment

The data presented in Table 3 provides useful insights into the qualifications of the SPED teacher sample. It

was promising that over 88% of respondents had pursued education beyond a bachelor's degree, with the majority (52.94%) holding a master's as their highest qualification. This indicates that SPED teachers in the sample generally demonstrated commitment to ongoing professional learning and specialization through graduate-level training.

Table 2
Age and Gender of the SPED Teachers

Age (in years)	Female		Male		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
51 and above	5	14.71	1	2.94	6	17.65
43-50	8	23.53	0	0	8	23.53
35-42	6	17.65	0	0	6	17.65
27-34	12	35.29	2	5.88	14	41.18
Total	31	91.18	3	8.82	34	100

Table 3
Highest Educational Attainment of the SPED Teachers

Educational Attainment	f	%
With Doctorate Units	1	2.94
Master's Graduate	18	52.94
With Master's Units	12	35.29
Bachelor's Degree	3	8.82
Total	34	100

This finding aligns with research demonstrating the importance of teacher characteristics, training, and working conditions. According to Toropova et al. (2021), factors like adequate resources, reasonable workload, collaboration, leadership support, professional development opportunities, and input into decision-making are vital for ensuring teacher job satisfaction and quality instruction. Similarly, Crispel and Kasperski (2022) highlighted the value of pre-service teacher perspectives on simulation-based learning and its contribution to developing skills like communication that support inclusive practices.

Additional research by Theobald et al. (2022) found teachers with advanced degrees tended to implement

evidence-based practices more effectively, ultimately helping students with disabilities achieve stronger reading outcomes. This suggests graduate-level qualifications may enhance teachers' abilities to stay current with field developments and meet student needs. Overall, the literature emphasizes how targeted training, ongoing professional learning, and supportive environments collectively strengthen teachers' capacity to facilitate positive learning experiences and outcomes for students in special education.

Length of Service

The data in Table 4 provides insight into the experience levels within the SPED teacher sample. Notably, 44.12%



had 6-10 years of experience, representing a sizeable group with substantial expertise but likely not at the end of their careers. This intermediate experience level offers

benefits for students as teachers have developed proficiency over time while maintaining engagement in the field.

Table 4
Length of Service of SPED Teachers

Length of Service	f	%
16 and above	6	17.65
11-15	6	17.65
6-10	15	44.12
1-5	7	20.59
Total	34	100.00

Research affirms the importance of experience for SPED teachers. Almeda San Jose and Phtiaka (2022) found experienced teachers had likely encountered diverse challenges, enabling effective strategy development to meet student needs. Their combined understanding of disability and experience can positively impact support abilities.

However, teachers' professional growth needs vary depending on career stage (Karlberg and Bezzina, 2022). New teachers especially require mentorship to improve skills and confidence (Ramani et al., 2022). Continuous professional development also allows teachers to effectively manage classrooms and behaviors while addressing stage-specific challenges (Ramani et al., 2022).

Teacher well-being, satisfaction, and retention further depend on supporting their unique requirements (Gilmour & Wehby, 2020). Targeted training, a positive

work culture, and administrative backing are vital for special education teacher success and effectiveness long-term (Karlberg and Bezzina, 2022). Recognizing experience levels within the teaching population permits customized professional learning to optimize student outcomes.

Type of Disabilities Handled

The rankings in Table 5 showing intellectual disabilities, autism, Down syndrome and ADHD as the most prevalent conditions align with national data on higher incidence disabilities served under IDEA (Voulgarides & Barrio, 2021). Intellectual disabilities topping the list is consistent with its reported status as one of the major disability categories (Voulgarides & Barrio, 2021). Additionally, the high rankings for autism and Down syndrome underscore growing numbers receiving support services for these developmental disabilities (Maenner et al., 2020).

Table 5
Type of Disabilities Handled by SPED Teachers

Type of Disabilities	f	Rank
Intellectual Disabilities	32	1
Autism	30	2
Down Syndrome	26	3
ADHD	25	4
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	9	5
Global Developmental Delay	8	6

*Multiple Response

The breadth of disabilities reflected in teachers' caseloads indicates the variety of instructional and behavioral strategies required within their generalist role. Cutting across multiple IDEA eligibility categories underscores the need for robust preservice programming

to sufficiently prepare educators for diverse student needs (Duda, 2020).

It also carries implications for the nature of professional development and supports provided to in-service teachers. Continuous skill enhancement allows them to optimally serve the range of disability profiles



represented (Maenner et al., 2020). With caseloads encompassing neurodevelopmental, cognitive and other impairments, specialized training is important to maintain proficiency addressing each condition.

Profile of the Respondents-General Education Teachers Age and Gender

The data in Table 6 indicate the general education teaching sample was predominantly female across all age brackets, representing over 90% of respondents. A notable skew existed towards the 36-51 year age groups

capturing over half of teachers. This gender disparity has potential implications for educational experiences based on differences in areas like relationship building, competence demonstration, and subject preferences between male and female teachers. Students typically do not view gender as an influential factor in teacher assessments so much as experience. However, the scant male representation could impact perceptions of teaching as a profession.

Table 6
Age and Gender of the General Education Teachers

Age (in years)	Female		Male		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
52 and above	9	11.84	0	0	9	11.84
44-51	20	26.32	2	2.63	22	28.95
36-43	21	27.63	4	5.26	25	32.89
28-35	20	26.32	0	0	20	26.32
Total	70	92.11	6	7.89	76	100

The predominance of females aligns with other research. For example, NCES (2021) reported 71% of all teachers were women averaging 40 years old. Similarly, inclusion special education was found to comprise 85.1% female and 14.9% male teachers. While more exploration is needed, this demographic pattern coincides with the heavily female-dominated characterization of education nationally (NCES, 2021). Considerations for how disproportionate gender breakdowns may differently influence pedagogy and learning warrant ongoing examination. Ensuring

diversity and representation could provide benefits by exposing students to a variety of role models and teaching approaches.

Highest Educational Attainment

The data in Table 7 show that the majority (96.05%) of general education teachers pursued postgraduate studies beyond their bachelor's degree through master's credits or qualifications. This mirrors the commitment to ongoing professional learning demonstrated by the SPED teacher sample.

Table 7
Highest Educational Attainment of the General Education Teachers

Educational Attainment	f	%
Master's Graduate	11	14.47
With Master's Units	62	81.58
Bachelor's Degree	3	3.95
Total	76	100.00

Holding graduate-level education carries implications for teaching quality and effectively meeting student needs. As such, supporting and encouraging teachers' completion of advanced degrees through funding and leave can help ensure the necessary competencies and expertise to deliver high-quality instruction (Alemayehu, 2022). Research demonstrates the beneficial impacts of continued professional

development. Alemayehu (2022) found it leads to improvements in teaching skills like action research and peer observation. Additionally, Szromek & Wolniak (2020) suggested higher qualifications or education units may result in increased job satisfaction. This implies that pursuing a master's could enhance career prospects, compensation, retention and fulfillment over the long run. Likewise, schools must provide structures



empowering ongoing growth, such as professional development offerings and learning communities (Admiraal et al., 2021). Collaborative, supportive environments develop

Field of Specialization

As indicated in Table 8, the overwhelming majority (92.11%) of general education teachers specialized broadly in multidisciplinary general education rather than single subjects. Their qualifications therefore

prepared them to teach multiple grade levels and content areas. Very few possessed expertise in specific fields like Filipino, math or English. Research supports this predominant generalist profile represented by the sample. Malahay (2021) found subject-specialized teachers delivered more efficient instruction due to adequate preparation. This underscores the value of continuous enhancement of skills and knowledge.

Table 8

Field of Specialization of the General Education Teachers

Field of Specialization	f	%
BEED-Filipino	3	3.95
BEED-Math	1	1.32
BEED-English	2	2.63
General Education	70	92.11
Total	76	100.00

Nonetheless, Mizzi (2021) revealed generalists benefit from subject-focused professional development like experiments, discussions and collaborative planning to develop content expertise and confidence when teaching non-specialized subjects. Enhancing knowledge in various disciplines can improve overall teaching effectiveness (Schwarz & Maschmann 2021). The implication is general teachers may benefit from targeted programs strengthening knowledge and instructional skills across curricular areas to optimize support for diverse learners (Heineke & Giatsou, 2020). While specialization ensures optimal performance, ongoing professional development maintains cross-curricular teaching capacities. Broadly, this highlights the need for teacher educators to expand general education teachers' repertoire through accessible skill-building opportunities, aligning with the notion that subject-

centered support upgrades abilities (Heineke & Giatsou, 2020).

Length of Service

Similar to SPED teachers, general education teachers represented a range of experience but trended towards moderate to long teaching careers, as indicated in Table 9. Having a diversity of experience levels may provide mutual benefits - experienced staff can mentor newcomers while fresh perspectives emerge from less seasoned members (Keller-Schneider et al., 2020). Though initially outperforming novices, ongoing professional development helps close newer teachers' gaps by developing their skills over time (Graham et al., 2020). To deliver high-quality education through current practices, schools should retain experienced educators while continuously upgrading all staff competencies via workshops, seminars and training aligned with career stages (Graham et al., 2020).

Table 9

Length of Service of the General Education Teachers

Length of Service (in years)	f	%
16 and above	21	27.63
11-15	17	22.37
6-10	29	38.16
1-5	9	11.84
Total	76	100.00

Teaching experience strongly influences overall job satisfaction as well (Kuchy, 2021), connecting to the implications of considerable experience for general

teacher stability and retention. By acknowledging experience's impacts and cultivating growth, schools



foster supportive environments advantageously affecting teachers and learners.

Type of Disabilities Handled

As shown in Table 10, ADHD, intellectual disabilities and autism emerged as the primary needs presented among students receiving supports according to the

general teacher sample. Their responses signal exposure mainly to neurodevelopmental and cognitive impairment issues, though to a lesser degree than specialized SPED education teachers. The top ranking of ADHD indicates it was the singularly most prevalent special need in mainstream according to these teachers.

Table 10

Type of Disabilities Handled by General Education Teachers

Type of Disabilities	f	Rank
ADHD	12	1
Intellectual Disabilities	11	2
Autism	5	3
Global Developmental Delay	4	4

*Multiple Response

Research underscores the necessity of targeted training and professional growth for general teachers serving inclusive classrooms. Francisco (2020) examined inclusion's benefits and challenges, highlighting the requirement for comprehensive preparation with strategies for diverse learners. Enabling access to ongoing development empowers teachers with the skills required to engineer supportive environments addressing varied requirements (Francisco, 2020). Most general education teachers lack formal disability-specific coursework, thus supplementary support remains vital (Francisco, 2020). Still, investing in all-encompassing training coupled with promoting positive attitudes regarding students with special needs strengthens the ability to accommodate all abilities inclusively, resulting in enhanced outcomes for all students as shown in Arcangeli et al.'s (2020) work.

Customized learning opportunities maintaining updated special education knowledge and classroom techniques optimizes general teachers' capacity to differentiate and meet the spectrum of needs inherent in inclusive models (Arcangeli et al., 2020).

Extent of Utilization of Different Strategies in Dealing with Disruptive Behavior of LSENs SPED Teachers Positive Reinforcement

As shown in Table 11, SPED teachers commonly utilized various positive reinforcement strategies to manage disruptive behavior, evidenced by a high aggregate mean of 4.52. Strategies most often employed included praising good conduct, rewarding with incentives, encouraging prosocial skills, and providing behavior-specific feedback. Communicating successes home occurred less frequently.

Table 11

Extent to which the SPED Teachers Utilized the Different Instructional Strategies in Dealing with the Disruptive Behavior of LSENs in terms of Positive Reinforcement

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Encourage socially responsible conduct (helping, sharing, waiting)	4.71	Highly Utilized
2	Use incentives to reward specific, positive behaviors (stickers, stamps)	4.65	Highly Utilized
3	Encourage good behavior	4.94	Highly Utilized
4	Use group incentives (games)	4.68	Highly Utilized
5	Utilize special privileges (special helper, extra computer time, tangible reward)	4.15	Utilized
6	Create a customized incentive program (stickers, prizes)	4.38	Highly Utilized
7	Give precise, uplifting instructions.	4.71	Highly Utilized
8	Send home notes and happy gram messages about the child's good behavior	3.97	Utilized



Aggregate Weighted Mean

4.52

Highly Utilized

Legend: 4.21-5.00-Highly Utilized; 3.41-4.20-Utilized; 2.61-3.40-Moderately Utilized; 1.81-2.60-Less Utilized; 1.00-1.80-Not Utilized

Related research supports the multi-faceted application of strategies to constructively handle challenges while promoting growth. Peacock (2020) emphasizes their utility in managing issues productively while advancing academic, social-emotional domains. Otto (2021) found positive reinforcement strengthened and perpetuated desired conduct, aligning with evidence of its efficacy for LSEN students. These findings imply positive reinforcement merits ongoing incorporation in SPED teacher practice as an evidence-based approach for LSEN disruptions effectively. Studies emphasize its importance for behavioral fortification and replication (Otto, 2021). Functional assessments, individualized plans, and understanding motivators can all aid improved instruction and anticipated management outcomes when leveraging reinforcement's influence.

Addressing hurdles is vital to success when harnessing this method (Peacock, 2020). Collectively, research validates the approach's utility for navigating difficulties constructively while advancing student abilities and well-being when implemented judiciously with supports tailored to individual characteristics and needs.

Negative Reinforcement

As shown in Table 12, while some reprimands and threats were utilized, exclusionary practices like suspension and expulsion occurred less often according to teachers. The overall moderate use of negative techniques coincides with prevalent positive reinforcement approaches. Physical intervention was an uncommon last resort.

Table 12

Extent to which the SPED Teachers Utilized the Different Instructional Strategies in Dealing with the Disruptive Behavior of LSENs in terms of Negative Reinforcement

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	A child or group of children should be singled out for misbehavior.	4.15	Utilized
2	Impose restraints physically	3.65	Utilized
3	Reprimand in a loud voice	3.94	Utilized
4	In-house suspension (send to principal office for misbehavior)	2.12	Less Utilized
5	Inform or threaten to expel the child from the classroom for misbehavior	3.71	Utilized
6	If a child exhibits aggressive or destructive behavior, send them home.	2.06	Less Utilized
Aggregate Weighted Mean		3.27	Moderately Utilized

Research examining strategies for managing emotional and behavioral challenges exacerbated by COVID disruptions informed this finding. Pelaez and Novak (2020) studied separation problems and anxiety increasing for students upon school return. In examining negative reinforcement, they considered verbal reproaches, threats of isolation, and rigid rules/routines but found such punitive measures generally contraindicated and able to exacerbate issues. Also, Pelaez and Novak (2020) emphasized individualized positive reinforcement, being responsive to students' emotions, collaboratively establishing clear standards,

and frequent reassurance/rewards for adaptation. The study also warned against rigid social adjustments like distancing that could damage attachment bonds, stressing reinforcement of family relationships and remote engagement when needed. Schieltz et al. (2020) explored impacts of positive reinforcement, instructional strategies, and negative reinforcement on behavior and academics, finding a four-step process identified effective methods and interaction of positive reinforcement and instruction with behavior. Addressing challenges requires understanding each student's needs and collaborating with parents and professionals



(Alhwaiti, 2022). Alhwaiti (2022) highlighted supportive strategies for both students with disabilities and their teachers during transitions and on an ongoing basis.

Punishment

As shown in Table 13, teachers most commonly responded to misbehavior through highly utilized verbal and nonverbal redirection rather than punitive strategies. Contacting parents occurred when necessary. Their disciplinary orientation emphasized guidance over formal consequences.

Table 13
Extent to which the SPED Teachers Utilized the Different Instructional Strategies in Dealing with the Disruptive Behavior of LSENs in terms of Punishment

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	To report inappropriate behavior, call the parents.	3.94	Utilized
2	Neglect misbehavior that does not disrupt class.	2.88	Moderately Utilized
3	If a child is not interested, use verbal redirection.	4.65	Highly Utilized
4	Uses nonverbal cues to refocus a child who is not paying attention (eye contact etc.)	4.74	Highly Utilized
5	Send notes home to report problematic behavior,(or frowny faces).	3.35	Moderately Utilized
Aggregate Weighted Mean		3.91	Utilized

Research supports SPED teachers primarily employing positive reinforcement over negative reinforcement or punishment due to its demonstrated effectiveness. While positive reinforcement is emphasized, ongoing training remains crucial for supporting teachers as behavioral needs evolve (Akpan, 2020; Sidin, 2021). To optimally accommodate diversity and nurture positive climates, SPED teachers can incorporate reinforcement, punishment, and instructional techniques (Schieltz et al., 2020). However, focus should remain on scientifically validated methods, specifically continued positive reinforcement training for LSEN management (Schieltz et al., 2020). Highly utilized strategies like nonverbal and verbal redirection when students are off-task prove most practical, while minimizing punishment.

Incentives, feedback, and customized interventions modify conduct constructively rather than reactively (Schieltz et al., 2020). Ongoing professional learning helps SPED teachers skillfully apply an array of approaches while stressing the importance of positive behavior systems shown paramount for classroom conduct and learning (Akpan, 2020; Sidin et al., 2021).

Behavior Modification

As shown in Table 14, SPED teachers highly utilized various proactive behavior modification techniques for disruptions, with weighted means ranging from 4.12 to 4.79 across all indicators. Strategies like feedback, timeouts, routines, emotion coaching and constant guidance saw greatest implementation. Their approach emphasized instruction and prevention over punishment.

Table 14
Extent to which the SPED Teachers Utilized the Different Instructional Strategies in Dealing with the Disruptive Behavior of LSENs in terms of Behavior Modification

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Discuss or give feedback on improper conduct	4.59	Highly Utilized
2	Utilize Time Out (Time Away to Calm Down)when someone is being aggressive	4.38	Highly Utilized
3	Use anger management strategy for self (deepbreathes, positive self-talk)	4.71	Highly Utilized
4	Prepare children for transitions with predictable routine	4.59	Highly Utilized



5	Uses a hierarchy and a clear curriculum in the classroom.	4.12	Utilized
6	Implements emotion coaching	4.35	Highly Utilized
7	Employs constant coaching (focusing, being patient, working hard)	4.79	Highly Utilized
Aggregate Weighted Mean		4.50	Highly Utilized

Research highlights a range of instructional strategies for addressing disruptive conduct among special needs students, from proactive classroom design to individualized behavior plans (Sobeck & Reister, 2020; Ahmad & Parween, 2021; Caldarella et al., 2021). Sobeck and Reister (2020) discuss strategies like arranging the learning environment, establishing rules/routines, building relationships, identifying triggers, intervening early, developing plans, and enlisting support to effectively prevent and manage challenging behavior. Ahmad and Parween (2021) recommend approaches incorporating positive behavior intervention/support, identifying triggers, personalized methods, antecedent techniques, school-wide behavior support and assistance to manage behavior in inclusive settings. While reprimands may temporarily suppress misbehavior, Caldarella et al. (2021) found they did not

decrease disruptions or increase engagement long-term compared to positive reinforcement and specialized intervention. Understanding and applying empirically-validated strategies can help educators constructively address conduct issues.

General Education Teachers

Positive Reinforcement

As shown in Table 15, general education teachers highly utilized various positive reinforcement techniques for disruptions, with weighted means ranging from 4.49 to 4.82 across all indicators. Strategies like praise, incentives, encouraging responsible conduct, customized programs, privileges and feedback saw greatest implementation. With an aggregate mean of 4.66, their overall approach fell into the "highly utilized" category.

Table 15

Extent to which the General Education Teachers Utilized the Different Instructional Strategies in Dealing with the Disruptive Behavior of LSENs in terms of Positive Reinforcement

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Encourage socially responsible conduct (helping, sharing, waiting)	4.71	Highly Utilized
2	Use incentives to reward specific, positive behaviors (stickers, stamps)	4.72	Highly Utilized
3	Encourage good behavior	4.82	Highly Utilized
4	Use group incentives (games)	4.66	Highly Utilized
5	Utilize special privileges (special helper, extra computer time, tangible reward)	4.50	Highly Utilized
6	Create a customized incentive program (stickers, prizes)	4.68	Highly Utilized
7	Give precise, uplifting instructions.	4.67	Highly Utilized
8	Send home notes and happy gram messages about the child's good behavior	4.49	Highly Utilized
Aggregate Weighted Mean		4.66	Highly Utilized

Legend: 4.21-5.00-Highly Utilized; 3.41-4.20-Utilized; 2.61-3.40-Moderately Utilized; 1.81-2.60-Less Utilized; 1.00-1.80-Not Utilized

Similar to SPED teachers, general education teachers most commonly employed praise, rewards and behavioral communication strategies to proactively address issues, demonstrating a consistent emphasis on positive approaches across both groups. Research shows positive reinforcement strategies should be emphasized in training to effectively manage LSEN disruptions, as these approaches more constructively impact behavior

than negative reinforcement (Alsheeb, 2022). Positive systems also help build supportive classrooms. Also, Alsheeb (2022) found teacher appreciation and participation, core to supportive leadership, significantly enhanced productivity. However, to optimally implement positive behavioral systems inclusively, educators require customized professional learning and input opportunities - ultimately optimizing outcomes.



Proper teacher support appears crucial to realizing reinforcement approaches' full benefits (Alsheeb, 2022). The research aligns that emphasizing positive strategies through collaborative training and leadership most effectively equips all teachers to address LSEN behavioral concerns. Ongoing, specialized professional development remains integral.

Negative Reinforcement

As shown in Table 16, while mild punishments occurred occasionally, general teachers less commonly relied on harsher deterrents compared to their positive approaches. Physical intervention and exclusionary discipline were applied sparingly to disruptions.

Table 16
Extent to which the General Education Teachers Utilized the Different Instructional Strategies in Dealing with the Disruptive Behavior of LSENs in terms of Negative Reinforcement

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	A child or group of children should be singled out for misbehavior.	3.84	Utilized
2	Impose restraints physically	2.80	Moderately Utilized
3	Reprimand in a loud voice	2.82	Moderately Utilized
4	In-house suspension (send to principal office for misbehavior)	2.75	Moderately Utilized
5	Inform or threaten to expel the child from the classroom for misbehavior	2.29	Less Utilized
6	If a child exhibits aggressive or destructive behavior, send them home.	3.05	Moderately Utilized
Aggregate Weighted Mean		2.93	Moderately Utilized

The moderate use of negative reinforcement points to a need for enhanced classroom management training. Physical restraint and suspension can harm student well-being, leading to disengagement, low self-esteem and resentment (Heyder et al., 2020). It is important to train teachers on strategies like positive environments, clear expectations and positive reinforcement to reduce necessity for negative techniques (Heyder et al., 2020). While contingent negative reinforcement decreases problem behavior when applied judiciously, positive strategies alone may prove insufficient. A comprehensive model incorporating empirically supported positive and contingent negative strategies creates a safer, more inclusive setting (Heyder et al., 2020). Simply including LSENs is inadequate for social integration - positive methods and behavior management are integral to well-being (Heyder et al., 2020). These findings emphasize the value of a supportive, inclusive

environment where LSENs conduct is addressed constructively via reinforcement to bolster socio-emotional development and welfare (Heyder et al., 2020). While occasional negative techniques occurred, positively focused training could better facilitate LSEN assistance and participation. A balanced, multifaceted strategic orientation appears most appropriate.

Punishment

As shown in Table 17, similar to their positive approaches, general teachers commonly responded to disruptions through communication versus formal discipline. They leaned toward preventative guidance over punitive consequences. Their moderate punishment utilization may relate to inadequate training handling issues productively. Providing professional learning could bolster skills and foster supportive environments (Sarin et al., 2021).

Table 17
Extent to which the General Education Teachers Utilized the Different Instructional Strategies in Dealing with the Disruptive Behavior of LSENs in terms of Punishment

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
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1	To report inappropriate behavior, call the parents.	4.14	Utilized
2	Neglect misbehavior that does not disrupt class.	3.41	Utilized
3	If a child is not interested, use verbal redirection.	4.07	Utilized
4	Uses nonverbal cues to refocus a child who is not paying attention (eye contact etc.)	4.50	Highly Utilized
5	Send notes home to report problematic behavior,(or frowny faces).	4.30	Highly Utilized
Aggregate Weighted Mean		4.08	Utilized

Sarin et al. (2021) emphasize punishment entails interpretation, finding even minor disciplines perceived as behavioral cues. A combined system applying positive reinforcement, judicious punishment when needed, and modification promoted classroom conduct. Focusing on reinforcement, behavior modification, and strategy effectiveness, Migliarini and Annamma (2020) provided guidance for well-regulated environments, aligning with importance of teacher training and fostering positivity (Losh, 2022). Losh (2022) underscores teacher significance and requiring safe, encouraging spaces where educators instinctively utilize positive approaches acknowledging strategies' value. Findings from Bambara and Kern (2021) and studies support specialized professional development in evidence-driven techniques like reinforcement to address disruptiveness. Positive behavior plans enabled individualized student interventions promoting conduct. A balanced multi-pronged model prioritizing reinforcement yet thoughtfully including constraint appeared optimal for managing LSEN behavioral challenges (Bambara & Kern, 2021). Ongoing support remains integral.

Behavior Modification.

As shown in Table 18, general teachers predominantly focused on proactively preventing disruptions through instruction, feedback, and emotional support over-reactive discipline. Their data underscored a shared emphasis with SPED peers on customized therapeutic approaches. One effective intervention was the GRIN Approach involving guidance, redirection and interaction (Espela, 2021). This included journal pseudo-social contracts where students, parents/guardians and teachers collaboratively agreed on specific interventions aiming to help students reflect on behavioral consequences in the classroom (Espela, 2021). The GRIN Approach could prove especially valuable for at-risk students in danger of dropping out or becoming aggressive (Espela, 2021). By establishing clear expectations and consequences through contracts, it encouraged students to take responsibility for actions and positively modify behavior (Espela, 2021). The researchers found general education teachers demonstrated a highly utilized therapeutic orientation toward behavior modification through proactive reinforcement and prevention strategies - highlighting collaboration on individualized supports. Approaches like GRIN showed promise promoting self-reflection and accountability (Espela, 2021).

Table 18
Extent to which the General Education Teachers Utilized the Different Instructional Strategies in Dealing with the Disruptive Behavior of LSEs in terms of Behavior Modification

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Discuss or give feedback on improper conduct	4.49	Highly Utilized
2	Utilize Time Out (Time Away to Calm Down) when someone is being aggressive	4.43	Highly Utilized
3	Use anger management strategy for self (deep breathes, positive self-talk)	3.93	Utilized
4	Prepare children for transitions with predictableroutine	4.51	Highly Utilized
5	Uses a hierarchy and a clear curriculum in the classroom.	4.37	Highly Utilized



6	Implements emotion coaching	4.43	Highly Utilized
7	Employs constant coaching (focusing, being patient, working hard)	4.57	Highly Utilized
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	4.39	Highly Utilized

Summary on the Extent to which the Respondents Utilized the Different Instructional Strategies in Dealing with the Disruptive Behavior of LSENs

As shown in Table 19, positive reinforcement and behavior modification received the highest ratings of "highly utilized" for both SPED and general education

teachers, with weighted means from 4.39-4.66. Punishment occurred at a "utilized" level from 3.91-4.08, while negative reinforcement was moderately utilized at 2.93-3.27. Notably, overall grand means of 4.02-4.05 indicated equivalent "utilized" discipline approaches across both groups

Table 19

Summary on the Extent to which the Respondents Utilized the Different Instructional Strategies in Dealing with the Disruptive Behavior of LSENs

Components	SPED Teachers		General Education Teachers	
	WM	Verbal Description	WM	Verbal Description
Positive Reinforcement	4.52	Highly Utilized	4.66	Highly Utilized
Negative Reinforcement	3.27	Moderately Utilized	2.93	Moderately Utilized
Punishment	3.91	Utilized	4.08	Utilized
Behavior Modification	4.50	Highly Utilized	4.39	Highly Utilized
Grand Mean	4.05	Utilized	4.02	Utilized

The data confirms common reliance on preventative, therapeutic techniques rather than consequences by both teacher populations in addressing behavior proactively through praise, routines and feedback (Fernandes et al., 2021). Results demonstrated comparable commitment to positive practices irrespective of role. Fernandes et al. (2021) emphasize diversified strategies bolster inclusion, learning and socio-emotional development through flexibility, adaptability and continuous modification. Arboiz (2022) links findings to necessity for specialized LSEN assessment training and ongoing professional development ensuring vital competencies. Additional support empowered attempting proven techniques while enhancing skills as inclusive educators (Arboiz, 2022). Dioso et al. (2022) and Healzer (2022) further supported how development authorized informed extinction decisions using reinforcement knowledge and

individual nuances. Recognition of subtle distinctions could optimize LSEN support, achievement and welfare. A therapeutic prevention emphasis appeared aligning practices. Continued specialized learning emerged integral to flexible, customized response and maximizing effectiveness promoting inclusion as per these implications (Arboiz, 2022; Dioso et al., 2022; Healzer, 2022).

Test of Difference between the SPED and General Education Teachers' Utilization of Different Instructional Strategies in Dealing with the Disruptive Behavior of LSENs

As shown in Table 20, differences were found between SPED and general teachers' reported use of some but not all instructional strategies

Table 20

Test of Difference between the SPED and General Education Teachers' Utilization of Different Instructional Strategies in Dealing with the Disruptive Behavior of LSENs



Variables	Source of Difference	Mean	sd	Mean Diff.	Comp. t- value	p-value	Decision	Result
Positive Reinforcement	SPED Teachers	36.18	1.71					
	General Education Teachers	37.25	2.66	-1.07	-2.532*	0.013	Reject Ho	S
Negative Reinforcement	SPED Teachers	19.62	2.65					
	General Education Teachers	17.55	5.37	2.07	2.697*	0.008	Reject Ho	S
Punishment	SPED Teachers	19.56	2.03					
	General Education Teachers	20.42	2.76	-0.86	-1.830	0.071	Do not reject Ho	NS
Behavior Modification	SPED Teachers	31.88	2.06					
	General Education Teachers	33.57	4.96	-1.68	-2.513*	0.013	Reject Ho	S

*significant at $p < 0.05$; NS = Not Significant; S = Significant

For positive reinforcement, the t-test revealed a significant difference with SPED teachers reporting lower use ($M=36.18$) than general teachers ($M=37.25$), $t=-2.532$, $p=0.013$. This aligns with research showing positive reinforcement effectively reduces problems for LSENs in general classrooms by reinforcing desired conduct (Laird, 2023). Negative reinforcement exhibited the reverse significant difference, with SPED teachers reporting higher use ($M=19.62$) than general teachers ($M=17.55$), $t=2.697$, $p=0.008$. Contingent negative reinforcement can shape behavior for students with intensive needs (Schieltz et al., 2020). Behavior modification also displayed a significant difference, with SPED teachers reporting lower use ($M=31.88$) than general teachers ($M=33.57$), $t=-2.513$, $p=0.013$. Research supports behavior modification as evidence-

Conclusion

This study provided valuable insights into strategies used by special education and general education teachers to address disruptive behavior among learners with special educational needs (LSENs). The findings have important implications for supporting teachers to

based for addressing disruptions among LSENs in inclusive settings (Merle et al., 2022). Unlike other strategies, the difference in punishment use was not significant, with SPED teachers reporting slightly lower use ($M=19.56$) than general teachers ($M=20.42$), $t=-1.830$, $p=0.071$. Previous research found punishment support depends on attribution of misbehavior (Twardawski et al., 2020). These findings imply a need for customized training highlighting effective LSEN management approaches for both groups (Felder & Singh, 2020). Communication and collaboration between educators also facilitates meeting diverse student needs through sharing specialized knowledge (Paju et al., 2022; Ghedin & Aquario, 2020). Tailored, mindful solutions geared for multi-ability classrooms appear warranted (Felder & Singh, 2020). effectively manage behavioral issues in the classroom. Several key points emerge from the results. Both teacher groups placed a strong emphasis on positive reinforcement and behavior modification techniques, aligned with research showing preventative approaches can most effectively change problematic behavior long-term. While punishment strategies saw moderate usage,



reinforcing the protective factors of positive techniques is important. Special education teachers reported using strategies like positive reinforcement and behavior modification significantly more than general education teachers. This indicates the value of their specialized training for classroom practices. However, as general teachers also interact with students with special needs, ensuring access to additional behavioral management resources could help promote consistency in positive supports across settings. The respondents' qualifications and balanced experience levels provide an ideal foundation for initiatives to enhance practices. Experienced staff mentoring newer teachers can guide while fresh perspectives strengthen the field jointly. Ongoing professional learning is critical to appropriately meet evolving student needs over diverse career stages. The findings suggest an ongoing commitment to evidence-based, therapeutic strategies for behavioral issues is needed. Continued training paired with leadership support can maintain effective approaches and enhance inclusion for all learners. The conclusion highlights priorities around supporting teachers through training, resources, and collaborative practices between specialization areas to foster supportive, inclusive learning environments.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Approval for this study was granted by the Cebu Technological University-Main Campus Approving Committee prior to commencement. Informed consent was obtained from all participating teachers who were informed of study procedures, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw without penalty. Confidentiality and privacy were strictly maintained through de-identification of data for publication and presentation in accordance with ethical standards for human subjects research.



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