



TECHNIUM
SOCIAL SCIENCES JOURNAL

www.techniumscience.com



Vol. 72/2025
A New Decade for Social Changes

PLUS
COMMUNICATION P



International
Communication & PR

Public Special Education Teachers' Challenges, Social Support, and Meaning in Managing Children on the Autism Spectrum

Kristel Anne T. Diaz^{1*} and Dennis V. Madrigal²

^{1,2}University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos, Negros Occidental, Philippines

kristelannediaz327@gmail.com

Abstract. Special Education Teachers are the primary providers of knowledge for children on the autism spectrum. With the increasing number of autism-diagnosed children, all special education teachers are probably going to need to teach a child with autism. Thus, this phenomenological study explored the public special education teachers' experiences in managing children on the autism spectrum in Northern Negros Occidental. Using a purposive sampling method, the data were collected from ten public special education teachers managing children on the autism spectrum in northern part of the province of Negros Occidental through an unstructured in-depth interview. There were only two encompassing questions and probing questions asked to extract significant information. The data were analysed using the modified van Kaam approach, as advocated by Moustakas. The findings of the study indicated that teachers wrestled with various challenges, coped by reinforcing social support, and found sense of meaning in managing children on the autism spectrum. Ultimately, this study underscores the demanding yet meaningful nature of their work, requiring immense patience and adaptability. The results not only underscore the necessity of raising awareness but also emphasizes the urgent need for enhanced institutional and social support to address teacher challenges and suppress attrition in this vital field.

Keywords. Special Education, autism spectrum, descriptive phenomenology, qualitative, Philippines

1.0 Introduction

Special Education teachers are the primary providers of knowledge for children with autism [1]. Autism (autism spectrum disorder or ASD) is one of the most prevalent and widely known developmental disorders [2] which affects approximately one out of every 100 children worldwide [3]. With this, there is an urgent need for skilled special education teachers who can navigate the complexities of teaching this diverse population [4]. While teachers in specialized school settings typically have higher levels of education and confidence, gaps remain in addressing fundamental challenges such as managing autism-specific difficulties like anxiety and sensory sensitivities, as well as effectively managing behavior and facilitating access to learning [5,6].

In Asia, a lack of awareness of autism has been widely reported in various communities in low-to-middle-income countries (LMICs), including their schools [7]. It is important to note

that teachers are valuable resources in LMICs, and recognizing teachers' knowledge of autism is vital because teachers serve as knowledge facilitators and agents of social transformation and growth in a community [2]. Teachers' professional self-efficacy in dealing with children with ASD can be enhanced by increasing their knowledge of the condition and attitude toward these children [8]. Additionally, teacher self-efficacy may lower the risk of burnout by preventing work stress, specifically for special education teachers [9].

In the Philippines, Republic Act 11650 institutes the policy of inclusion and services for learners with disabilities in support of Inclusive Education Act. This law also aims to train and equip all teachers, including child development teachers and workers, principals, administrators, non-teaching staff of the school, sign language interpreters, parents, guardians, and care providers as partners in the care, development, education, and advancement of learners with disabilities. Since 2018, the Department of Education (DepEd) has issued and implemented several Department Orders that have improved services, facilities, and assessment tools for students with disabilities [10].

While the country as a whole has made great progress toward inclusive education, especially for students with disabilities, challenges persist on the Special Education teachers' standpoint, particularly those teaching in the northern part of Negros Occidental. In terms of teachers managing children with autism, the nationwide shortfall of Special Education teachers raises immediate issues which can be felt even in the province. Infrastructure problems where Western Visayas was reported to lack in classrooms for the 2024–2025 academic year complicate matters even more since crowded classrooms and compromised learning environments result from this shortage. Furthermore, teachers in Negros Occidental's remote locations, such as those teaching in the northern part public schools, suffer more since they usually operate in underfunded institutions.

In terms of teachers' experiences managing children on the autism spectrum in the Philippines, there are phenomenological studies that explored on the challenges and coping mechanisms of teachers handling children with special needs like ASD [11,12]. However, in the local context, there is a dearth of research that specifically addresses the experiences of public primary SPED teachers managing children on the autism spectrum specifically in Northern Negros Occidental. This is the gap that this study would like to fill in. Thus, this study explored the lived experiences of public primary Special Education teachers managing children on the autism spectrum in the city schools' divisions of Northern Negros Occidental. The findings aim to raise awareness on managing children on the autism spectrum and to foster greater support for teachers handling them.

2.0 Literature Review

Children on the autism spectrum. The etiology of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) remains uncertain, and there are currently no effective medical interventions [13]. This neurodevelopmental disorder manifests within the first three years of a child's life and persists throughout their lifespan [14]. While no definitive cure for ASD exists, studies indicate that behavioral interventions yield advantages at the group level [15].

Behavioral and Instructional Challenges. A fundamental strategy for effective classroom management is to enhance student engagement by implementing motivating instructional activities and appropriate consequences for academic behaviors [16]. However, in the case of students with autism, significant challenges arise due to inadequate behavior regulation [17]. As there is a definitive correlation existing between the implementation of proactive classroom management strategies and favorable student outcomes [18], executing strategies aimed at

fostering positive behavioral changes and enhancing academic engagement fall within the instructor's control [19].

Children's aggressive and self-injurious behavior. According to specialized teachers managing aggressive behaviors, it is crucial to recognize behavior patterns, apply strategic responses, and create virtual reality interventions simulating calming environments and social scenarios to help with children's behavior regulation [20]. Also, self-injurious behavior (SIB), including hand hitting, self-cutting, or hair pulling, is prevalent among individuals with ASD caused by positive or negative reinforcement and mediated by social, sensory, and material factors [21]. Special education teachers more commonly utilized positive reinforcement, behavior modification, and structured routines to manage disruptive behaviors, such as aggression and self-injurious behavior (SIB) [22].

Differentiated instruction. Differentiation refers to a varied preparation and design of inclusive teaching practice that respond adaptively to students' needs [23]. Considering that educators significantly influence the execution of differentiated instruction (DI), it is needful to examine the variables that enhance teachers' instructional practices, including their personal attributes such as their attitudes and self-efficacy [24]. In addition to these characteristics, practical instructional elements, particularly the critical factor of teacher collaboration, can also affect teachers' implementation of differentiated instruction [25].

Developmental setback when routine changes. Special Education (SPED) teachers support children with autism by providing a clear daily structure through timetables and visuals, managing transitions, and alerting students of potential change in advance [6]. Changes in the environment, daily schedule or other routines often cause behavioral resistance and tantrums [26,27]. As a result, teachers face major difficulties when children suffer developmental setbacks brought on by changes in routine [28,29].

Personal Challenges. Special education teachers encounter professional fatigue stemming from challenging school conditions, excessive workloads, and the slow learning pace of students which adversely affects their physical and mental well-being [30]. Aside from the greater prevalence of occupational injuries, educators implementing early intensive behavioral interventions for children exhibiting challenging behaviors report elevated levels of stress and emotional exhaustion [31]. While specialized school teachers have more education and confidence, they still struggle to manage autism-specific issues like anxiety and sensory sensitivities, manage behavior, and facilitate learning [5].

Fatigue and exhaustion. Managing children with neuro-developmental conditions like ASD increases teacher burnout due to work demands that follow the children's learning needs [32]. Additionally, increased emotional fatigue correlates with diminished job satisfaction [33]. Some of the challenges faced by special educators are excessive administrative tasks and substantial class sizes [34]. Moreover, demands were cited as a reason related to working conditions among special educators [35].

Maintaining patience. Teachers of students with ASD must possess the competency of patience, as their students often exhibit no reaction or response to any activity [36]. Despite the challenges, teachers are required to be creative and innovative in their classroom preparations [27]. Nevertheless, when challenges were deemed excessively formidable, teachers' sense of efficacy in their ability to implement strategies to address these challenges was undermined [6].

Institutional Challenges. This refers to systemic barriers within the schools that hinder teachers from delivering suitable and effective instruction to children in this study. These enumerated the challenges that extend beyond individual classrooms and influence the organization of support and the delivery of the learning experience. Such obstacles can hinder

educators from providing the customized instruction and support that children on the autism spectrum need to excel academically and socially. Thus, these also relate parents and the school.

Insufficient parental follow-up. Lack of parental follow-up at home points to a gulf between home and classroom settings [37]. Issues that led to this poor parental cooperation or the inability of parents to team up with teachers were identified as denial, community stigma, lack of knowledge, superstitious beliefs, unrealistic parental demands, and poor parental support from parents [38]. Involved parents and family could facilitate a more thorough understanding of an intervention's efficacy, thereby enhancing the design and execution of the intervention [39,40].

Parental denial. Some parents continue to reject the reality of their children's learning disabilities [41]. In other cases, majority of parents experience a state of denial or grief during their child's preschool years as they are unable to cope with their child's diagnosis of autism [38]. While parents often experience immediate embarrassment from the feedback and comments of SPED teachers regarding their children, it is essential to enhance the importance of acceptance among parents and to emphasize the necessity of collaboration with teachers [41].

Limited classroom accommodation. The physical environment is a factor that influences the balance between challenges and strategies in educating children with ASD [6]. Studies in Applied Behavior Analysis have consistently demonstrated that interventions focused on environmental modifications can enhance academic engagement and concurrently reduce problem behaviors linked to educational difficulties [19]. On the other hand, constrained resources present considerable challenges for special education teachers, affecting the quality of education and inclusive systems [42].

Teacher shortage. The deficiency of educators qualified to teach children with autism and other disabilities is attributable to inadequate instructional facilities and a shortage of well-trained special education teachers [43]. Additionally, teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders significantly heightened the probability of turnover among all categories of educators [44]. Another study on rising attrition rates and the shortage of highly qualified special education teachers identified work-related stressors, not feeling supported by administrators, and feeling that their profession negatively affected their quality of life and contributed to burnout [45].

Lack of training. In order to accommodate the changing educational environment and facilitate student success, special education teachers must engage in ongoing professional development [42]. Teachers commonly concur that inclusion is vital for social justice; however, many lack confidence in their ability to assist students with special educational needs, particularly those with ASD [6]. Therefore, it is essential to finance opportunities for ongoing learning, despite challenges and time limitations [46].

Reinforcing social support. Teachers often lack confidence in delivering instruction for children with ASD [47]. On the other hand, teachers who feel acknowledged, appreciated, and motivated are more inclined to maintain their dedication to the profession, thereby enhancing student performance [48]. Additionally, job satisfaction of special education teachers correlates with their propensity to retain their positions [34].

Parent-teacher collaboration. Parent-teacher collaboration fosters a sense of cooperation, teamwork, and shared responsibility for students' success [42]. Teachers' self-efficacy, expectations, and intervention fidelity correlate with enhanced communication to parents [49]. Collaboration and communication between parents and teachers are essential in supporting students with diverse learning needs, as comprehending the influence of family is a vital foundation for general and special education teachers of children with ASD in establishing a robust partnership [50].

Co-teachers support. Strong relationships with colleagues are one among others that augment academic performance, psychological well-being, and learning engagement [42]. Particularly in teaching young children with ASD, collaboration is an essential element of high-quality programs [51]. Later on, as children progress to the mainstream, collaboration opportunities between general and special education teachers is highly needed as effective inclusion relies on coordinated efforts [52].

Health professionals' diagnoses. Children with ASD are likely to achieve substantial improvements when diagnosed early and involved in structured, intensive, evidence-based interventions [53,54]. Teachers lack the proficiency to diagnose children with particular disabilities [55], hence, efficient screening and diagnostic services are crucial for identifying students on the autism spectrum [56]. An effective evaluation process incorporates consultations from a physician, psychologist, and speech-language pathologist, along with parental information concerning developmental history and current functioning [57].

Sense of meaning. As managing children on the autism spectrum can be very challenging, it is important to focus on the child's progress and celebrate their achievements, no matter how small they may seem [58]. An effective educational experience for children with ASD necessitates the proactive engagement of teachers in promoting academic and social opportunities [6]. There exists a sense of job satisfaction in their teaching profession as they cultivate relationships, foster engagement, and make a holistic change in the lives of children with special needs [42].

Children's progress. Teachers do not only evaluate student success through academic progress but also the emotional, social, and behavioral development of students with special needs [42]. Children with autism possess unique strengths that can emerge only when challenging behaviors are removed. These strengths are essential and should be utilized to effectively navigate the educational process and facilitate integration into society [59]. For teachers, student achievements is one of the factors influencing job satisfaction and serve as an intrinsic reward for teachers teaching children with autism [60].

3.0 Philosophical Assumptions

Creswell and Poth [61] provide four philosophical assumptions that guide qualitative research to detach personal views and expectations away from the findings of this study: ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological. Ontological assumption relates to the study of the nature of reality. The researcher believes that the experiences lived by primary special education teachers working with children on the autism spectrum are influenced by personal, professional, and contextual factors, therefore opening unique insights into their practices, challenges, and the meaning they derive from their roles in fostering effective education. Hence, it is necessary to explore and understand them from the teachers' viewpoints. Epistemological assumption refers to the study of knowledge. The researcher used the participants' school environment to immerse herself in the participants' experiences in managing children on the autism spectrum by shadowing and doing classroom observation. Axiological assumption is about the importance of values in research. The researcher acknowledges the importance of teachers prioritizing and cultivating a supportive atmosphere aiming to instill a sense of self-worth and support. Methodological assumption is about the methods used in the process of the research. An inductive process was utilized in searching for patterns from the observations. The researcher used descriptive phenomenology as the research design and adhered to the modified van Kaam's analysis popularized by Moustakas in analyzing data.

4.0 Methods

This study employed a descriptive phenomenology research design to describe the participants' lived experiences in managing children on the autism spectrum. This design aims to describe the common meaning of several individuals' lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon [61]. In this study, the researcher aimed to focus on the practical and realistic experiences of primary Special Education teachers managing children on the autism spectrum. The participants of this study were ten public primary Special Education teachers managing children on the autism spectrum in the city schools divisions of Northern Negros Occidental identified using a purposive sampling technique. Inclusion criteria were primary Special Education teachers with degrees of Bachelor of Education major in Special Education with at least five years of teaching experience in public school, currently handling children diagnosed with autism, and had undergone training either for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) or Individualized Education Program (IEP) training for children with special needs.

This study used unstructured in-depth interviews as the research instrument. In unstructured and generally open-ended questions, the researcher asks a few questions intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants [61]. The study's central point was their encounters with the phenomenon, so the questions exclusively centered on this aspect. With this, participants were able to conveniently describe what they thought or felt about a phenomenon, specifically, their lived experiences in managing children on the autism spectrum. A follow-up interview ensured the accuracy of the statements gained during the initial interview, and participants were able to review the encoded transcript to check and confirm their statements.

In terms of trustworthiness or rigors, these signify the degree of confidence in the data, the research process, and the resulting interpretations in qualitative research. The foundation for data trustworthiness is based on the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability [62]. Member checking, in which participants confirmed the accuracy of their transcribed interviews, was used to establish credibility in this study. Thick descriptions and probing techniques improved transferability, enabling the findings to be applied in different contexts. Dependability was attained by using the modified van Kaam approach popularized by Moustakas [63] and taking thorough field notes, which guaranteed data consistency and traceability. Lastly, an external audit was used to establish confirmability, confirming that the participant descriptions of their experiences and the data's thematic presentation aligned.

Lastly, the researcher upheld the fundamental ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice ensuring the ethical integrity of the study, in line with the guidelines established by the Philippine Health Research Ethics Board (PHREB). It specifically addressed concerns about participant privacy and the confidentiality of collected data. Informed consent was obtained from the participants, and vulnerability was reduced by ensuring voluntary participation and confidentiality. Participants were given time to recuperate on sensitive questions that potentially elicited negative emotions, while benefits included increased awareness and shed light on the experiences of these educators in supporting children on the autism spectrum. Anonymity and data protection defended privacy, while online publication and disclosure of any conflicts of interest ensured transparency. Justice was upheld by selecting the participants based on the inclusion criteria and the researcher prepared a snack and a token of appreciation for their responsive participation. The researcher's qualifications in education and training on the qualitative research method, as well as adequate resources, ensured that the study was rigorous. Presentations and dissemination of findings to relevant stakeholders aimed to increase community involvement.

5.0 Results

Thematic Insights

To ensure the authenticity of the insights, the researcher applied phenomenological bracketing to her observations about the lived experiences of public primary special education teachers managing children on the autism spectrum. To interact with the data from a fresh, objective standpoint, the researcher purposefully ignored her personal prejudices, assumptions, and past knowledge about autism education. During the research process, the researcher ensured that her personal experiences with this population were minimal, the participants' comments and reactions were objectively noted over her expectations, and the interview transcripts were revisited without imposing preconceptions.

Following the interviews with the ten participants and the verbatim transcription of their responses, the researcher applied the van Kaam method, as popularized by Moustakas, to identify key insights from the data. The researcher created composite descriptions that captured the essence of the phenomenon, detailing both 'what' the participants experienced and 'how' they experienced it. The researcher then organized similar insights into three (3) main themes with sub-themes outlined as follows:

Theme 1: Wrestling with the challenges of managing children on the autism spectrum

Special education teachers encounter numerous challenges when managing children on the autism spectrum (autism/ASD). Based on the participants' experiences, the multifaceted challenges affecting the efficacy of educational practices and the overall learning environment for these students center on three (3) key subthemes: behavioral and instructional challenges, personal challenges, and institutional challenges.

Behavioral and instructional challenges. Teachers provided valuable insights into their experiences in dealing with behavioral and instructional challenges which were enumerated as children's aggressive and self-injurious behavior, differentiated instruction, and developmental setbacks.

Children's aggressive and self-injurious behavior. Children on the autism spectrum display tantrums, defiance, and aggressive behaviors which may be triggered even before the start of class. Sometimes children are already crying and making tantrums upon leaving home which results to teachers and their classmates getting the brunt of it upon arriving at school. Not only do teachers worry for the safety of the rest of the children in the class, but also for these children who tend to even hit themselves yet are not aware of what they are doing. With this, participants have relayed their experiences dealing with these behaviors.

It would have been okay if it didn't hurt, you know? But it really hurt, I got punched (laughs), and I really felt it. So, if even I was hurt, how much more so for the young children? (*Selle, personal communication, May 16, 2024*).

Because he has a tendency to headbang, he might even charge at his classmates or grab them (*Harlene, personal communication, June 27, 2024*).

So sometimes he's already frustrated—he even arrives at the classroom already crying. That's why sometimes you have to deal with it, you as the teacher there, or whoever else is around, or worse, his classmates there get the brunt of it (*Juvy, personal communication, May 16, 2024*).



There is one who bites, who spits, who punches, who instantly punches you on the chest or on your back (*Rose, personal communication, May 9, 2024*).

Yes, miss, it really happens. That you would just suddenly be so surprised, miss, because you thought everything was fine. Then suddenly, you'd already be hit, because you didn't realize, 'Oh, his mood had already changed, he was already having a tantrum (*Annie, personal communication, May 9, 2024*).

To test the sharpness of the pencil, he would open his clothes and poke his stomach. Once he feels it hurts, he'll be okay (laughs) but if not, he will sharpen it more (*Jay, personal communication, May 9, 2024*).

Especially that there are times that your pupils in autism, it's like it's a day that they just want to tantrums, that they just want to cry even that sometimes there's no reason. So that became a challenge (*Joy, personal communication, May 9, 2024*).

Because when he has tantrums, he's really into throwing things and gets very physical. Like, he really hurts. He doesn't care who you are, even the teacher (*Ann, personal communication, May 21, 2024*).

There are those who have self-inflicting behaviors. There are also those who really inflict others (*Christine, personal communication, May 28, 2024*).

Differentiated instruction. Teachers encounter considerable difficulties in providing differentiated instruction to children on the autism spectrum attributed to the varied learning needs, capabilities, and developmental stages of their learners. They relayed not much struggle with those children who are high-functioning unlike with low-functioning whom they tend to focus on and give close guidance and individual assistance. In their practice, participants emphasized their effort in modifying materials and differentiating their approaches when managing children.

So far, in handling them in class, of course, you really have what's called—the differentiated approach, of course, for them. So it's not really, not necessarily a different worksheet for one, they're just on the same level, but the way you approach them is also according to their needs (*Juvy, personal communication, May 8, 2024*). So, for example, for one of my students with ASD who seems to be quite a fast learner, I give them CVC tasks. And then for the other students, I have them do coloring, and I sit right in front of them, at least so that I can teach them individually (*Rose, personal communication, May 9, 2024*).

In terms of delivering instruction... there are some children who are high-functioning with autism. So there really isn't a problem. However, with the non-functional ones, you really have a hard time delivering instruction to them (*Jay, personal communication, May 17, 2024*).

For this certain child here, he doesn't know how to do subtraction yet—so it should only be up to 10 for him. That's why I just prepare activities up to 10 for him. Then this other child here is already quite advanced; we've already reached the number 20 with him. Or this other child here, because we're already doing borrowing with him, his level is also quite advanced. That's where my different activities come from, since there are already many available online (*Ann, personal communication, May 21, 2024*).

When there are really students who struggle, one thing I do is modify the materials. They are the ones I really focus on, providing close assistance. Because there are others who are high-functional, you know? Their IQs seem quite high. So with just one instruction, they get it right away. But there are really those you still need to be right there by their side (*Christine, personal communication, May 21, 2024*).

Developmental setbacks when routine changes. As children on the autism spectrum usually depend on controlled and predictable surroundings, teachers find it difficult to keep children's once acquired skills intact when their routine changes. Mostly due to reasons beyond their control, teachers have to go back on what they have already taught or even go back to zero when breaks in routine happen, such as when children incur recurrent or consecutive absences, or when routines at home changed. When such developmental setbacks happen, teachers find that their previous efforts seemed to be in vain and have no choice but to do it all again.

So it's back to zero, already knowing, miss, that with ASD, once you can no longer practice with them or keep them in their routine, it already disrupts their system. So it's back to zero again (*Harlene, personal communication, May 8, 2024*).

For example, even if I don't miss a single day [of teaching], and then for example, they still end up being absent; if my class is every day and they miss two days, my class is back to zero (laughs). Like we just learned ABC, and then I have to go back to that again. That's my problem, that's really what I have to deal with (*Rose, personal communication, May 9, 2024*).

Just when you think, 'Wow, he/she's really doing well,' you know? And then he/she has several consecutive absences. When they come back, it's back to the beginning again (*Ann, personal communication, May 28, 2024*).

I have one student who had been doing really well, but after a change in his routine, all my efforts seemed to be in vain. He seems to be overstimulated all the time now, and he's developed a lot of steaming, which wasn't an issue before. I really feel sorry for him (*April, personal communication, May 28, 2024*).

Personal challenges. Managing children on the autism spectrum is a highly challenging vocation, and special education teachers frequently encounter considerable personal difficulties as a result. The constant demands of child support and behavioral management present personal challenges for teachers, particularly in terms of fatigue and exhaustion and maintaining patience everyday.

Fatigue and exhaustion. Managing children on the autism spectrum can be physically and emotionally taxing. Teachers often have to deal with chasing children and think of strategies to address tantrums which usually drain them even with just having to handle two children in a day. Some teachers even have other workloads such as handling classes in the regular school which adds up to their exhaustion. These daily demands of managing difficult behaviors, providing individualized support, and maintaining high levels of energy result in their fatigue and exhaustion.

It's tiring, really tiring—especially with the non-graded students, your children who are still running around, doing all sorts of things. You get tired going there, you get tired going here, you even have to sit down—you really exert a lot of effort (*Selle, personal communication, May 8, 2024*).



Yes, physically, it's tiring. You really get drained in the afternoon, miss, after being with them (*Harlene, personal communication, May 8,2024*).

Sometimes you just feel like crying, you know, sometimes when your patience is all gone. It's like you're already so drained, oh, it's just too much, right? That's what gets to me. It's unbearable, isn't it? That's why I just send the child home (*Rose, personal communication, May 17, 2024*).

But there really are days, miss, when it's just a whole day of them throwing tantrums. It's like there were only two of them, but why were you already so worn out? (*Annie, personal communication, June 18,2024*).

Here in the public school, it's really difficult. You really have to be all around, you really exhaust all your roles. That's why during the day, you really end up saying how long my journey today has been. You feel really exhausted at the end of the day (*Jay, personal communication, May 17,2024*).

So you became drained, not just physically, but emotionally and mentally. Because you are thinking different kinds of strategies and emotionally you are being affected (*Joy, personal communication, May 17,2024*).

Maintaining patience. Maintaining patience for children on the autism spectrum becomes challenging for teachers when handling children's meltdowns, non-compliance, and communication struggles. Instances such as not being able to impose even minimal physical discipline to the children since they won't understand why teachers reprimand them anyway, children not able to do simple life skills tasks nor obey simple instructions, or children hurting them then smirk back as if provoking them to anger, really cost a great amount of patience and self-control in them.

No matter what I do—you can't make it stick with the child because the child doesn't really understand. If you scold them, you yourself will just end up tired and frustrated. That's why they advise, 'Once you're already tired, go out of the classroom. Just go over there, but make sure the child is safe and stays there. Shout out your feelings and frustration' (*Selle, personal communication, May 16,2024*).

Well, miss, even just putting on his socks, miss, he couldn't do it. It wasn't because he didn't want to. It was because he really didn't know how yet, it seemed. So eventually, I just kept at it, as in, what's the word—really guided him, miss, you know? Like I myself would really hold his hand (*Harlene, personal communication, May 16, 2024*).

At times he keeps hurting [others] with slaps and punches, then he even smirks at you as if to make you angry—so I need to take a breather first, I'll go to the restroom first. (inhale) 'Okay, you stay there for now.' (*Rose, personal communication, June 28, 2024*).

It has happened to me before (laughs), it's like you really feel like you want to fight back at him/her, because it was so incredibly painful (*Annie, personal communication, May 9,2024*).

When the child arrived here, he was already not in a good mood. And then another one seemed to want to eat, and the other child didn't want to let go of his cellphone. So there you have it, there were really three of them all at once. It was really difficult to manage them (*Jay, personal communication, May 9,2024*).

Sometimes I'm using my charisma (laughs) like singing some songs, or lead him or her to dance or to sing especially if that can convert his or her attention. Or example, giving him or her different activities, or bring in them in front of the classroom that has an air, fresh ambiance of nature (*Joy, personal communication, May 9, 2024*).

There are also some who, if you give them a single instruction like 'sit down' or things like that, they immediately listen or obey what you said. Then you also have others who you need to repeat it to many times; you really need to prompt them for you to get them to do what you want (*Christine, personal communication, May 21, 2024*).

So what I've learned along the way is that your real attitude towards teaching should be like this — you have to be flexible. Flexible, resourceful — because you can't expect everything to go perfectly every single day (*April, personal communication, May 21, 2024*).

Institutional challenges. Teachers managing children on the autism spectrum encounter considerable institutional challenges that hinder their capacity to deliver effective and sustainable support. These systemic barriers impeding their teaching efficacy were identified as insufficient parental follow-up, parental denial, limited classroom accommodation, teacher shortage, and lack of training.

Insufficient parental follow-up. It sets a great obstacle for teachers when home and school do not align in goals and practices for children on the autism spectrum. Teachers relayed that their efforts are useless when parents do not follow up children at home, especially in terms of discipline and reinforcements. Teachers also cited that there are children who are already doing well in class but because of lack of follow up at home, children tend to be inconsistent as well. Participants expressed their sentiments on the impact of insufficient parental follow-up in the educational process.

I can only address things here at school, I can only do so much here. But when they get home and things are still the same, then our work here at school is also useless because there's no follow-up at home (*Selle, personal communication, May 16, 2024*).

Another thing I discuss with the parents is, 'If I try to be firm here inside the classroom, we should also follow up on that at home.' But lately, I've observed that whatever the child really wants (laughs), that's what happens. So it's such a pity that I'm firm here, but then it's still relaxed over there at home (*Harlene, personal communication, May 16, 2024*).

That's what I always emphasize to the parents, that it shouldn't just be focused on here at school, it should also be at your homes. But my problem is if the parents are lazy to follow through (*Rose, personal communication, May 17, 2024*).

Yes, miss, there are also five of them there, miss, who are just lacking follow-up. They are such bright kids, you know, but because both their mother and father have work, so it's only here that they can learn. When they arrive at their home, it's already gone [the learning] (*Annie, personal communication, May 17, 2024*).

If there's positive reinforcement at school, there should also be at home. So if there's punishment at school, there should also be punishment at home (*Ann, personal communication, May 21, 2024*).

It would really be helpful if, after they arrive home, there would still be some follow-up. Because there are some parents who, when they leave here at school, don't go straight home (*Christine, personal communication, May 21,2024*).

Parental denial. Teachers find it difficult to carry out necessary interventions and support when parents refuse to accept their children's diagnosis. Even after the doctor has explained to them their child's condition and possible outcomes, parents still refuse to understand or take it and would turn to teachers seeking to hear a different explanation. They perceive that their child's condition is just a temporary, curable illness, insisting that their child will move to regular school on the following year or in no time which adds up to teachers' responsibility making them understand and accept the fact.

There are times they would even ask you, 'Miss, is my child already better?' you know? 'Miss, will this also go away eventually?' Their understanding of autism is like it's just an illness, or like it can just be cured, or like because you've already taught them, it will subside (*Harlene, personal communication, May 16,2024*).

Because there are times when they really struggle to accept it. Like, oh yes, that's indeed the case, ma'am, but it's like they really don't give them attention at home (*Rose, personal communication, May 17, 2024*).

Even now, miss, there are still some parents who haven't accepted it yet. They are still in denial as parents, they still insist that their child be moved to a regular school soon (*Annie, personal communication, May 17,2024*).

There really are parents, ma'am, who are in denial. Especially if the parent, like, in terms of family—(stuttering) their family status seems to be somewhat... you know... that's it, they seem to be in denial—still really in denial. Because they still want to seek other interventions so that they can just let go of their child [from special education], so that they can finally be in regular school (*Jay, personal communication, May 9,2024*).

(pause) it's denial on their part, or they don't want—or they feel pity on the case of their special children (*Joy, personal communication, June 28, 2024*).

Hmm, there really are parents who are still in denial. Even though there's already a diagnosis, they've already gone with the child to the doctor, the expected outcome has already been explained to them, there are still parents for whom it's really difficult — they still really haven't totally accepted the child's condition (*Ann, personal communication, May 21,2024*).

There are likely some parents who are still in the denial stage. So it's like they even insist that their child should immediately be moved to regular classes next year (*Christine, personal communication, May 21,2024*).

There are definitely others who just can't accept it (*April, personal communication, May 28,2024*).

Limited classroom accommodation. Physical aspects of the environment such as classrooms and other instructional accommodations are utilities needed for teachers to effectively support children's needs when it comes to learning. In the case of the participants' school settings, teachers have to share the classroom with another class, they cannot facilitate toilet training and sensory intervention due to having lack of comfort room and sensory room.

On top of that, they also lack tools and updated materials in facilitating instructions. These limited accommodations are cited as one of the teachers' institutional challenges.

In our private school there, the floor was matted, and it wasn't cement. The sides there were really matted as well. At least if there's banging or anything, the children would be cushioned (*Selle, personal communication, June 27, 2024*).

And also, we can't do toilet training, because we really don't have a comfort room here (*Harlene, personal communication, May 16, 2024, line 1244*).

We could manage, but we don't have enough classrooms. We handle ASD students together—and ASD students should have... have a tantrums room for them. They should have a space where they can have their tantrums. That's really what's needed (*Rose, personal communication, May 17, 2024*).

Look at our building, miss—oh, I mean our classroom. One classroom was even split into two. And then, oh, [inaudible reason], it's really hot. (After a 6-second pause) It's really hot here (*Annie, personal communication, May 17, 2024*).

Especially that it's very hot inside the classroom, and supposed to be the (pause) we have no aircondition room (laughs), so we know that some of the autism they really like cool environment (*Joy, personal communication, May 9, 2024*).

Here, when the child enters, there's no sensory room at all. It's immediately straight ahead [into the regular environment] (*Ann, personal communication, May 21, 2024*).

But it would probably be even better if the next budget would also be increased, for more updated materials for them (*Christine, personal communication, May 28, 2024*).

For our speech room, you can go inside there. But we still don't have something like a machine, you know, where you can hear your own speech with a switch. We don't have that (*April, personal communication, May 21, 2024*).

Teacher shortage. Due to the increasing enrollment of children with autism, the need for accurate teacher-student ratio has been another challenge for teachers on top of the persistent shortage of qualified professionals in the field. Teachers have to do multigrade and handle more than the ideal count of students per teacher in a special education setting. They cannot also follow the advised class grouping which should be based on disability and are not able to meet children on a daily basis since they have a lot of children to accommodate. These are just some of the implications of teacher shortage.

Well, supposedly, the ratio for a SPED teacher is only 1 to 15, you know? Mine is 32, and in the other [class/group] it's 20. And the one in our kindergarten is even different. But that 32 to 1 ratio is really not ideal (*Selle, personal communication, May 16, 2024*). Yeah, well, because we have so much enrollment. It would really be so much better if I could do one-on-one sessions, but the schedule is every day, because so you could follow up right away, you know, miss? (*Harlene, personal communication, June 27, 2024*).

We now handle multiple grades because so that we can at least accommodate everyone, you know? Well, because the population of our enrollment is really increasing a lot (*Juvy, personal communication, June 27, 2024*).



Because the division says that classes should be categorized by disability, but if we were to do it by disability, there's a shortage of teachers (*Rose, personal communication, May 17,2024*).

We are short, miss, because we should only have about 10 children. Well, we have 15, sometimes 20 (*Annie, personal communication, May 17,2024*).

“It's just me [handling the class]. Because here in this public school, we don't have a teacher aid or an assistant teacher. However, in the private school there is. There's an assistant teacher. So for us, that's how it is, sometimes I just call on a colleague here [for help]” (*Jay, personal communication, May 9,2024*).

It seems we might be the only ones in all of Negros where the SPED teacher in the SPED Center also has classes in Grade 2 and Grade 1, and then still has [their SPED] classes. So it's even more for us, more difficult (*Christine, personal communication, May 21, 2024*).

It's really not accurate. The ratio isn't accurate. Because you know, there's already a memo about it. In the memo, for the same [disability], you know, it's like 8... 8 is to 1—if it's HI; if it's ID then — 5 is to 1. That's how it is. So even if it's 8 or 5, our ratio is really not 8 or 5 because there are really many [students] (*April, personal communication, May 21,2024*).

Lack of training. Given that children with autism have complex and varied learning needs, teachers handling them need to be trained on how to approach, meet, and facilitate instructions and interventions, and to prepare them on what to do in unpredictable situations. Updated training and workshops such as behavior modification, occupational therapy, and Individualized Education Program (IEP) are some of the mentioned needed provisions to equip and better support teachers in managing children on the autism spectrum.

Because in public SPED, they really don't have training for behavior modification or anything. If you want that kind of training, that's still outside [of what's provided]. You will still have to spend your own money (*Selle, personal communication, June 27,2024*).

Actually, the kinds of things that OT does, we are also doing here. But it's really different, miss, if you are trained as a real OT, you know? So that's really what we as SPED teachers want to learn (*Harlene, personal communication, May 16,2024*).

It's like a refresher, you know? It's like that. And uhm, the current trends now, so that at least what you [already know] can also be updated, oh maybe what I know now is really not like that anymore (*Juvy, personal communication, May 16,2024*).

But what we need is training for IEP. That's really what we need, how to prepare a complete IEP. Then regarding materials, how to properly assess the child, specifically for them (*Rose, personal communication, May 17,2024*).

Yes, miss, because things are now different. You know, miss, before, autism was just autism. But now, there's this and that (inaudible) A, and then this and that (inaudible), now it's no longer SNED. So that you will also be updated (*Annie, personal communication, June 28, 2024*).



But it was way back in 2017, you know, we attended a seminar in Cagayan De Oro, because we said we wanted to update our skills and of course, with the CPD units that the seminar gives. So we really grabbed that opportunity. It was like it was really our personal money that we spent (*Jay, personal communication, June, 2024*).

And since, there really aren't in public schools like, you know, on-call OTs to provide trainings. Because of course there are times when you kind of forget, you know, but it would really be good if there were, you know, professionals in the field [to teach us] how to deal with this, certain behavior, how to do it [properly] (*Ann, personal communication, May 21, 2024*).

To also provide additional strategies to address the other behaviors of the child as well, just like for example the training for speech therapy and occupational therapy. Because unlike other schools, we don't have those (*Christine, personal communication, July 10, 2024*).

But the training that we need is in speech, OT training, and PT training. It should really be from people who are really accurate, who are professionals (*April, personal communication, July 10, 2024*).

Theme 2: Reinforcing social support in managing children on the autism spectrum.

In order to effectively manage children on the autism spectrum, it is essential to reinforce social support, as it addresses the challenges that teachers and caregivers encounter in managing the children's unique needs. During the interviews, three (3) key subthemes emerged that aid teachers in navigating their hurdles: parent-teacher collaboration, co-teachers support, and health professionals' diagnoses.

Parent-teacher collaboration. Collaboration and positive relationships between parents and teachers are big factors that propel teachers to thrive in their role, making them feel that their efforts are seen and that they are not alone in supporting goals for children on the autism spectrum. Cooperative parents who are actively attending conferences/meetings with teachers are vocal in relaying concerns, problems, or progress at home which, according to teachers, should be continued and reinforced especially for parents who are otherwise. Likewise, teachers have developed open communication with parents which serves as an avenue where they learn from each other.

The parents are cooperative, which is good. Which is what we ask for, that's all we need. 'Because if you want improvement in your child, as parents and teachers, we really need to help each other (*Selle, personal communication, May 16, 2024*).

When it's PTC, they are really attentive. They also talk about their concerns and if there's improvement in their child. And I also talk about what the problem is. I am really open with them (*Harlene, personal communication, May 8, 2024*).

Any concerns that they have, they also bring to our attention, and we also, any concerns that we have for them, and whatever our need is from them, they are just one chat away (*Juvy, personal communication, May 8, 2024*).

But my students' parents are really good. We also have a mutual understanding. Because if it weren't [okay], if you can't [get along with] the parents—you would really have problems there (*Rose, personal communication, May 17, 2024*).



That must be why my students' parents are so attentive. Because the support [I receive] is really good, you know? That if they see anything that seems to be lacking (*Annie, personal communication, June 28,2024*).

So that's how it should be, collaboration between—both parties, parents and the school, really. So it really should be hand in hand. Parent and teacher really should be a team (*Jay, personal communication, May 9, 2024*).

Here in our school, our parents are very supportive when it comes to our programs and activities, and when it comes to their children under to our advisory (*Joy, personal communication, May 17,2024*).

Even though I teach them specific things, at least I also learn from what they show me (*Ann, personal communication, May 21,2024*).

It's also good that some of the parents of our children with Autism are really so involved in all the programs that are for their child (*Christine, personal communication, May 21, 2024*).

The thing I'm most proud of is how I've built such trust and connection with the parents. Because the parents are a tremendous help. That even if I stumble, I know I can count on them to continue our shared goal and mission because we are already aligned (*April, personal communication, July 10,2024*).

Co-teachers support. Co-teachers collaboration provides essential social support that sustains special education teachers in managing the distinct challenges presented by children on the autism spectrum. Teachers get ideas and learn from each other by sharing their experiences managing children with autism. By exchanging ideas, receiving teachers get teaching strategies and effective interventions for children from their co-teacher who once handled the child. In the interview, participants revealed the benefit of having extra pair of hands and collaborating with their co-teachers.

We also have these lock sessions, you know? Sometimes you ask, 'How are you handling so-and-so?' 'Ah, I'm handling them this way (*Selle, personal communication, June 27,2024*).

Furthermore, as teachers, you also share ideas. There you really contribute to uhm, so that we can at least help the children. It's like just being collaborative, you know? Because before, you were on your own, so [we ask] 'How did you deal with that, you know?' It's like that, just really sharing experiences (*Juvy, personal communication, May 16,2024*).

So sometimes I ask Sir, I say, 'Sir, please just lower it a bit for me, because my children are already ASD, so it's really difficult for them.' (*Rose, personal communication, May 17, 2024*).

So we exchange ideas. Whatever I've applied here, I also share with my classmates in other schools. Whatever they are applying, you also share [it]. It's just an exchange of ideas on what more we can do to help the child (*Jay, personal communication, June 28,2024*).

So sometimes I do my own research, or my own unique activity that is originally comes from me, that I can be able to share it to my co-teacher and also to my pupils.



But if one of my co-teachers has some materials that he or she can share, so I ask to borrow it and then enhance (*Joy, personal communication, May 9, 2024*).

I actually tell them, if there's a problem, for example, if they're not good at reading or they don't know math, they need to report it every afternoon. Report. If remedial is needed, I will handle the remedial (*Ann, personal communication, May 21, 2024*).

Health professionals' diagnoses. Health professionals' diagnoses support teachers' observation and teaching strategies by determining proper recommendation and proper placement of the child. Through this, teachers do not get questioned on the child's condition as diagnosis coming from health professionals is required to enroll the child. This also enables teachers to accurately know the level and capacity of the child for them to provide the appropriate materials and activities suited for each learner.

We really need an assessment from the doctor, so that at least there will be a proper recommendation, you know, plus proper placement of where your child should really be (*Selle, personal communication, May 16, 2024*).

Well, there are children who are fluent readers, they just read, but they don't understand, so how will you place them in the graded [level]? It's like that. Well, that's where the doctor's assessment helps (*Harlene, personal communication, May 16, 2024*).

Yes. And it comes from the professional himself, from the expert himself, really. There it can help us as teachers, because when making a decision, it won't just be said that you are the only one to blame (*Juvy, personal communication, June 27, 2024*).

So, it's really good, miss, if the children have a diagnosis. So you will know the child's level, that that's really just it for them, compared to those without a diagnosis that is just pending (*Annie, personal communication, May 17, 2024*).

Because just going by manifestations, it's really not certain, because we teachers really cannot diagnose them. So we need proper medical professionals to diagnose our learners here at the SPED Center (*Jay, personal communication, May 9, 2024*).

If there is a diagnosis, so if there are already referrals now, like what the pediatrician said. He/she wrote down that this is the specific learning [level] of the child, this is only the age group of his/her cognitive state, so that's where we can base [our decisions] on what kinds of activities are suited for that child (*Ann, personal communication, May 21, 2024*).

And it's also right there in the assessment, you know, from the Developmental Pediatrician, what level they are at, what kind of development they currently have. So they really cannot proceed if there isn't a recommendation from the Developmental Pediatrician (*Christine, personal communication, May 21, 2024*).

We base what kind of class they need on the doctor's assessment. The assessment also has suggestions at the bottom on what activities to prepare. That's where [we get our guidance] (*April, personal communication, May 21, 2024*).

Theme 3: Finding sense of meaning in managing children on the autism spectrum. Special education teachers find sense of meaning in their role by appreciating and witnessing the progress of children on the autism spectrum. To be an instrument of change and be a part of

a child's progress makes their profession rewarding and fulfilling. For them, these improvements are not only the child's or parent's achievements but also theirs.

Children's progress. Teachers feel fulfilled even with the small progress their children on the autism spectrum make. It is equally rewarding for them when they receive positive results from doctors who manage the child or when they see happy faces and hear appreciation of their efforts from parents. For the participants, being able to modify the child's difficult behavior and move the child to the regular classroom affirm and reward their efforts. The participants shared that even the smallest milestones serves as a powerful reflection of their success as educators.

If only we could leap for joy—we really would—for those achieved goals. At least we're just helping each other along. Small improvements are also very big [for us]. It's good because the parents appreciate what you do here as a teacher in the classroom (*Selle, personal communication, May 16, 2024*).

So it's like it's also very fulfilling for me, that they were under my care, that after their assessment with the Doctor, their result was also very positive. Because I have two students who I can now transfer to the regular grades (*Harlene, personal communication, May 8, 2024*).

It's because for instance, when you have a child whose behavior is really quite challenging, and by the time you've been able to work with them and modify [their behavior], then that's the part that feels really rewarding for you as a teacher. So it just feels really good as a teacher (*Juvy, personal communication, May 8, 2024*).

Yes, it's a big reward as a SPED teacher. (laughs) It might seem small, but it's already a big deal for the parents. Just being able to achieve that for them is already a big deal for the parents. When they say, 'Ma'am, he/she can now write his/her name,' it's a big deal for the parents and a big deal for us (*Rose, personal communication, June 28, 2024*).

Our learners are really showing improvement, and with that improvement, I see the happy faces of their parents. And because of that, I can truly say that I'm an effective teacher (*Jay, personal communication, May 9, 2024*).

All of them are very unique, but we are happy that you can see a progress even a little bit. But for me, it's already a big progress that the child or the pupils showed his eagerness (*Joy, personal communication, May 9, 2024*).

So the physical aspect is just part of the job. But your self-satisfaction comes from seeing their progress. This noise/commotion will just disappear, but the progress, when you see in the child 'Wow, he/she is really better now,' because of you, right? You're already satisfied and at the same time it's a rewarding part (*Ann, personal communication, May 28, 2024*).

That's why, that's why whenever I have my requests to them like 'Please do this' 'Please do that,' they really never refuse. Because they see, you know, they see that their child is making progress (*April, personal communication, May 21, 2024*).

6.0 Discussion

Wrestling with the challenges of managing children on the autism spectrum. Special education teachers' responsibilities surpass traditional teaching as they must confront various

challenges that can profoundly affect their instructional efficacy and the holistic development of children on the autism spectrum. As children with autism form a challenging group of learners with an array of learning issues that hinder with their educational progress [47], teachers have to deal with behavioral and instructional challenges including children's aggressive and self-injurious behavior, delivering differentiated instruction, and developmental setbacks when routine changes. Teachers also struggle with personal challenges such as feeling fatigue and exhaustion and the constant need to maintain patience. Providing extra attention to students in the form of frequent verbal prompts and individual support can be draining for teachers [64]. Additionally, teachers also frequently face numerous institutional obstacles that impede their capacity to offer reliable and efficient assistance to children particularly insufficient parental follow-up, dealing with parental denial, limited classroom accommodation, teacher shortage, and lack of training.

Reinforcing social support in managing children on the autism spectrum. Despite the various challenges, these special education teachers find solace amidst difficulties when they receive continuous social support. Parent-teacher collaboration fosters a sense of cooperation, teamwork, and shared responsibility for students' success [42]. Support from co-teachers was also greatly esteemed. Having no teacher assistant/aid, teachers get a sense of relief when co-teachers extend extra hands during difficult moments, such as when multiple children are having tantrums or meltdowns, to help maintain control. Strong relationships with colleagues are one among others that augment academic performance, psychological well-being, and learning engagement [42]. Moreover, the diagnoses made by health professionals significantly influenced educators' comprehension and methodology. Diagnostic insights are regarded not merely as technical instruments but as validations of teachers' professional instincts, bolstering their confidence and competence [57].

Finding sense of meaning in managing children on the autism spectrum. Teachers gained a profound sense of meaning in their effort by witnessing the progress of the children, despite the numerous obstacles they faced. For them, being able to modify the child's difficult behavior or move the child to the regular/graded classroom affirm and reward their efforts. These milestones were not only emotional victories for the teachers, but they also brought immense joy to the parents, who expressed gratitude and happiness when they observed their child making progress [65]. Teachers were also encouraged and validated when positive results are obtained from doctors' assessments, which confirmed the effectiveness of the strategies and interventions they have implemented. Each small step served as a poignant reminder of their impact, thereby strengthening their commitment and affection for their role. ensure the authenticity of the insights, the researcher applied phenomenological bracketing to her observations about the lived experiences of public primary special education

7.0 Summary of the Findings

The lived experiences of public primary special education teachers managing children on the autism spectrum were thematically described into three (3) main themes: wrestling with the challenges of managing children on the autism spectrum, reinforcing social support in managing children on the autism spectrum, and finding sense of meaning in managing children on the autism spectrum. Their experiences indicated that while teachers have grappled with numerous challenges in managing children with ASD, specifically in terms of behavioral and instructional difficulties, personal, and institutional challenges, a stream of reinforcement arose

from social support that helped them survive these difficulties by means of collaboration with parents and co-teachers, and diagnoses from health professionals. The interplay of struggle and support yielded a deep sense of meaning derived from witnessing and appreciating children's progress.

8.0 Conclusion

To This study revealed that managing children on the autism spectrum means entering each day ready to patiently and gently meet complexity and unpredictability. Teachers' persistence is a deliberate and conscious decision—to show up, to care, and to try again. The work of these special education teachers is an act of loving amidst challenges, of believing in development where progress is slow, and of sustaining compassion in the face of relentless demands. Theirs is a practice of patience and survival for themselves and for their students.

9.0 Limitations of the Findings

This study acknowledges several constraints. Firstly, for the generalizability of the result, this study is only applicable to public primary special education teachers handling graded and non-graded classes. Likewise, result might differ in some other circumstances such as focusing on transition classes or classes strictly grouped according to age/level. Participants' education, trainings, and tenure may also be considered. Lastly, participants degree in special education with five years and up teaching experience should be considered; experiences may have differed had the participants been novice teachers.

10.0 Practical Value of the Paper

To The practical value of this study provides useful teacher-reported, classroom-based data that can be a basis in the provision of better institutional support that teachers need to survive and carry out their role, and to reinforce social support especially between home and school. With the attrition problem for special education teachers nationwide, it is best to address what teachers thought as areas for improvement to help suppress this issue and to ensure they feel valued. Lastly, this may pave the way to identify the factors that contribute to their successful teaching experiences and retention.

11.0 Directions for Future Research

To Future researchers may come up with conducting the same study utilizing special education teacher participants in private institutions or in different geographical areas. They may also explore the experiences of Special Education teachers of other educational backgrounds and tenure of service. Lastly, a quantitative or mixed method can also be explored or incorporated on the same topic to elaborate and numerically validate these findings.

References

- [1] Cahyo Adi Kistoro, H., Setiawan, C., Latipah, E., & Putranta, H. (2021). Teachers' Experiences in Character Education for Autistic Children. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 10(1), 65-77. DOI: 10.11591/ijere.v10i1.20743
- [2] Low, H. M., Wong, T. P., Lee, L. W., Makesavanh, S., Vongsouangtham, B., Phannalath, V., ... & Lee, A. S. S. (2021). A grassroots investigation of ASD knowledge and stigma among

- teachers in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 80, 101694. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rasd.2020.101694>
- [3] Zeidan, J., Fombonne, E., Scora, J., Ibrahim, A., Durkin, M. S., Saxena, S., ... & Elsabbagh, M. (2022). Global prevalence of autism: A systematic review update. *Autism Research*, 15(5), 778–790. <https://doi.org/10.1002/aur.2696>
- [4] World Health Organization: WHO. (2023). Autism. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/autism-spectrum-disorders?>
- [5] Lisak Šegota, N., Lištiaková, I. L., Stošić, J., Kossewska, J., Troshanska, J., Nikolovska, A. P., ... & Preece, D. (2022). Teacher education and confidence regarding autism of specialist primary school teachers. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 37(1), 14-27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2020.1829865>
- [6] Cook, A., & Ogden, J. (2021). Challenges, strategies, and self-efficacy of teachers supporting autistic pupils in contrasting school settings: a qualitative study. *European journal of special needs education*, 37(3), 371-385. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2021.1878659>
- [7] Teo, J. X., Lau, B. T., & Then, P. (2022). Autism Spectrum Disorders in Sarawak: An Overview and Analysis of Educator Awareness, Training, Development Opportunities, and Challenges. *International Journal of Disability, Development, and Education*, 69(2), 623-639. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1034912X.2020.1731433>
- [8] Lu, M., Zou, Y., Chen, X., Chen, J., He, W., & Pang, F. (2020). Knowledge, attitude and professional self-efficacy of Chinese mainstream primary school teachers regarding children with autism spectrum disorder. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 72, 101513. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rasd.2020.101513>
- [9] Fu, W., Tang, W., Xue, E., Li, J., & Shan, C. (2021). The mediation effect of self-esteem on job burnout and self-efficacy of special education teachers in Western China. *International Journal of Developmental Disabilities*, 67(4), 273-282. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20473869.2019.1662204>
- [10] Sevillano, S. (2023). VP Sara stresses importance of inclusive education vs. 'othering'. *Philippine News Agency*. (<https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1201845>)
- [11] Gomez, D., Pascual, L., & Regidor, R. (2023). Teachers' Experiences Teaching Children with Special Needs: A Qualitative Inquiry. *International Journal of Research Studies in Education*, 12(1), 1-5. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5861/ijrse.2022.370>
- [12] Paguirigan, E. M., Paguirigan, M. J. R., & Ablog, L. A. (2023). Lived Experiences of Special Education Teachers in the New Normal. *Migration Letters*, 20(8), 1331–1341. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59670/ml.v20i8.6075>
- [13] Chen J., Wang G., Zhang K., Wang G., and Liu L., A pilot study on evaluating children with autism spectrum disorder using computer games, *Computers in Human Behavior*. (2019) 90, 204–214, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.08.057>, 2-s2.0-85054670993
- [14] Jackson, S. L., & Volkmar, F. R. (2019). Diagnosis and definition of autism and other pervasive developmental disorders. In F. R. Volkmar (Ed.), *Autism and pervasive developmental disorders* (pp. 1–24). New York: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108297769.002>
- [15] Li, D., Larsen, L., Yang, Y., Wang, L., Zhai, Y., & Sullivan, W. C. (2019). Exposure to nature for children with autism spectrum disorder: Benefits, caveats, and barriers. *Health & Place*, 55, 71-79. DOI: 10.1016/j.healthplace.2018.11.005
- [16] Miguel, D. M. (2020). Teaching Practices for Children with Autism (CWA) at Baguio SPED Center. *Mountain Journal of Science and Interdisciplinary Research (formerly Benguet State University Research Journal)*, 80(2), 55-71. (<https://ejournals.ph/article.php?id=17248>)
- [17] Sabornie, E. J., McKeithan, G. K., & Pearson, J. N. (2022). Students with Autism and Classroom Management. *Handbook of Classroom Management*, 517-533. Retrieved from <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003275312-32/>
- [18] Youngs, P., Hirsch, S. E., Nagro, S., & Kennedy, M. (2023). Commonality and variation in how special education faculty teach classroom management. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 46(4), 284-299. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08884064231170577>

- [19] Meindl, J. N., Delgado, D., & Casey, L. B. (2020). Increasing engagement in students with autism in inclusion classrooms. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 111, 104854. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2020.104854>
- [20] Jung, M., & Lee, E. (2020). Specialised teachers' perceptions on the management of aggressive behaviours in children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorders. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 17(23), 8775. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17238775>
- [21] Steinfeldt-Kristensen, C., Jones, C. A., & Richards, C. (2020). The prevalence of self injurious behaviour in autism: a meta-analytic study. *Journal of autism and developmental disorders*, 50, 3857-3873. doi:10.1007/s10803-020-04443-1
- [22] Torregosa, G. L., Fe, B. A., Dy, R. S., Letrondo, J. A., Manalastas, R. D., Espina, R. C., ... & Calasang, V. O. (2024). Strategies in dealing with disruptive behavior of learners with special education needs. *Journal of Chemical Health Risks*, 14(1), 3150-3171. (<https://jchr.org/index.php/JCHR/article/view/3252/2214>)
- [23] Griful-Freixenet, J., Struyven, K., Vantieghem, W., & Gheysens, E. (2020). Exploring the interrelationship between Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiated Instruction (DI): A systematic review. *Educational Research Review*, 29, 100306. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2019.100306>
- [24] Scarparolo, G., & Subban, P. (2021). A systematic review of pre-service teachers' self efficacy beliefs for differentiated instruction. *Teachers & Teaching: Theory & Practice*, 27(8), 753-766. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2021.2007371>
- [25] Ghedin, E., & Aquario, D. (2020). Collaborative teaching in mainstream schools: Research with general education and support teachers. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, 16(2), 1-34. (<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1268954>)
- [26] Suresh, L. R., & George, C. (2019). Virtual reality distraction on dental anxiety and behavior in children with autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of International Dental and Medical Research*, 12(3), 1004-1010. Retrieved from (<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336603991>)
- [27] Ibiam, J. U. (2020). Managing children with autism in an inclusive classroom. *Journal Of The Nigerian Academy of Education*, 15(1). (<https://journals.ezenwaohaetorc.org/index.php/JONAED/article/viewFile/1311/1353>)
- [28] Kaur, R., Boobna, T., & Kallingal, P. (2022). Effect of Covid-19 lockdown on Indian children with autism. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, 125, 104230. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2022.104230>
- [29] Masters, G. N., Taylor-Guy, P., Fraillon, J., & Chase, A. M. (2020). Ministerial briefing paper on evidence of the likely impact on educational outcomes of vulnerable children learning at home during COVID-19. (https://research.acer.edu.au/learning_processes/24)
- [30] Yücel, Ö., & Atmaca, T. (2024). Causes and Effects of Occupational Fatigue Among Special Education Teachers. *International Journal of Educational Studies and Policy*, 5(1), 73-97. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11233749>
- [31] Mestari, Z., Rivard, M., & Mello, C. (2024). Learning from educators: Implementation of a positive behavior support program targeting challenging behavior in children with autism. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 107, 102491. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2024.102491>
- [32] Uzodinma, U. E., N Onyishi, C., Ngwoke, A. N., Ugwu, J. I., Okorie, C. O., A. Amujiri, B.,... & Akanaeme, I. N. (2022). Effectiveness of rational emotive occupational health coaching in reducing burnout symptoms among teachers of children with autism. *Science Progress*, 105(2), 00368504221100907. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00368504221100907>
- [33] Alenezi, S., Almadani, A., Al Tuwariqi, M., Alzahrani, F., Alshabri, M., Khoja, M., ... & Alzahrani, R. (2022). Burnout, depression, and anxiety levels among healthcare workers serving children with autism spectrum disorder. *Behavioral Sciences*, 12(1), 15. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs12010015>
- [34] Vittek J. E. (2021). Promoting special educator teacher retention: A critical review of literature. *SAGE Open*, 5(2), 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244015589994>

- [35] Billingsley, B., & Bettini, E. (2019). Special Education Teacher Attrition and Retention: A Review of the Literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 89(5), 697-744. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654319862495>
- [36] Sakarneh, M. A., Ziadat, A. H., Almakahleh, A. A., Rababah, M. A., Alhassan, A. H., Al Muhairat, L. A., & Al-Rababah, H. A. (2023). Socio-Educational Competencies Required for Teachers of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Parents' perspective. *Education and Science*. 2023;25(5):176-194. <https://doi.org/10.17853/1994-5639-2023-5-176-194>
- [37] Patterson, A. L. (2024). Examining School to Home Transference of Behavioral Interventions Provided to Elementary Students With Autism (Doctoral dissertation, Walden University). (<https://www.proquest.com/openview/68cf042c91721d76c803cd4208dc1194/1?cbl=18750&dis=s=y&pq-origsite=gscholar>)
- [38] Senoo, E. J., Oti-Boadi, M., Senoo-Dogbey, E. V., Bampoe, O. J., & Laari, L. (2024). Barriers to inclusive education of children with autism: Ghanaian teachers' perspective. *Discover Education*, 3(1), 146. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44217-024-00242-3>
- [39] Factor, R. S., Ollendick, T. H., Cooper, L. D., Dunsmore, J. C., Rea, H. M., & Scarpa, A. (2019). All in the family: A systematic review of the effect of caregiver-administered autism spectrum disorder interventions on family functioning and relationships. *Clinical child and family psychology review*, 22, 433-457. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-019-00297-x>
- [40] Acar, S., Chen, C. I., & Xie, H. (2021). Parental involvement in developmental disabilities across three cultures: A systematic review. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, 110, 103861. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2021.103861>
- [41] Allam, F. C., & Martin, M. M. (2021). Issues and challenges in special education: A qualitative analysis from the teacher's perspective. *Southeast Asia Early Childhood Journal*, 10(1), 37-49. <https://doi.org/10.37134/saecj.vol10.1.4.2021>
- [42] Gonzaga, J. C. (2024). Go or Not Go: Choices of Special Education Teachers. *International Multidisciplinary Journal of Research for Innovation, Sustainability, and Excellence (IMJRIS)*, 1(5), 355-370. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11274507>
- [43] Daga, C. T. (2021). Challenges and Indulgences behind Multigrade Teaching: A Case Study. *IOSR Journal of Research & Methods in Education (IOSR-JRME)*, 11(3), 45-56. DOI: 10.9790/7388-1103074556
- [44] Gilmour, A. F., & Wehby, J. H. (2020). The association between teaching students with disabilities and teacher turnover. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 112(5), 1042–1060. <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000394>
- [45] Hester, O. R., Bridges, S. A., & Rollins, L. H. (2020). 'Overworked and underappreciated': special education teachers describe stress and attrition. *Teacher Development*, 24(3), 348–365. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2020.1767189>
- [46] McGinn M. K & Kamman M. (2025). What supports can school leaders provide to develop effective and committed special education teachers? *IRIS*. (<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/induction/cresource/q2/p09/>)
- [47] Van Der Steen, S., Geveke, C. H., Steenbakkens, A. T., & Steenbeek, H. W. (2020). Teaching students with autism spectrum disorders: What are the needs of educational professionals? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 90, 103036. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103036>
- [48] Barton, J. (2020). Creating a Culture of Support for Teachers Is Vital to Student Success TASB. (<https://www.tasb.org/news-insights/creating-a-culture-of-support-for-teachers>)
- [49] Azad, G. F., Marcus, S. C., & Mandell, D. S. (2021). Partners in school: Optimizing communication between parents and teachers of children with autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 31(4), 438-462. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2020.1830100>
- [50] Accardo, A. L., Xin, J. F., & Shuff, M. (2020). Special education teacher preparation and family collaboration. *School Community Journal*, 30(2), 53-72. (<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1276815>)

- [51] Bateman, K. J., Schwartz, I. S., & Gauvreau, A. N. (2022). It Takes a Team: Working Together to Meet the Needs of Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in an Inclusive Setting. *Inclusive Practices*, 1(4), 132-138. <https://doi.org/10.1177/27324745221097354>
- [52] Al Jaffal, M. (2022). Barriers general education teachers face regarding the inclusion of students with autism. *Frontiers in psychology*, 13, 873248. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.873248>
- [53] Lake, J. K., Tablon Modica, P., Chan, V., & Weiss, J. A. (2020). Considering efficacy and effectiveness trials of cognitive behavioral therapy among youth with autism: A systematic review. *Autism*, 24(7), 1590-1606. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613209187>
- [54] Eisenhower, A., Martinez Pedraza, F., Sheldrick, R. C., Frenette, E., Hoch, N., Brunt, S., & Carter, A. S. (2021). Multi-stage screening in early intervention: A critical strategy for improving ASD identification and addressing disparities. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 51, 868-883. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-020-04429-z>
- [55] Presquito, R. M. E., & Madrigal, D. V. (2022). Passion and Resilience: Experiences of Public Primary School Teachers in Handling Children with Reading Difficulties in Online Teaching. *Asian Journal of Advanced Research and Reports*, 16(10), 67-80. DOI: 10.9734/AJARR/2022/v16i1030511
- [56] Lessner Listiakova, I., & Preece, D. (2020). In-service education and training for teachers regarding autism spectrum disorder: a review of the literature. *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis: Studia Psychologica*, 12, 177-199. Retrieved from <http://nectar.northampton.ac.uk/12943/>
- [57] Ashcroft, W., Argiro, S., & Keohane, J. (2021). Success strategies for teaching kids with autism. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003238294>
- [58] Hosono, N. D., Siy Jr, B., Melgar Jr, M., & Valencia, M. S. (2022). Successful Ways of Dealing with A Child with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Asian Journal of Research in Education and Social Sciences*, 4(2), 59-68. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55057/ajress.2022.4.2>
- [59] Troshanska, J., Rasimi, T. R., & Memedi, B. (2022). Behavior In Children With Autism Spectrum Disorders. *BJES*, 132. (<https://bjes.beder.edu.al/uploads/bjes-26-june-2022.pdf#page=137>)
- [60] Eldred, S. W. (2021). Self-Efficacy and Job Satisfaction in Teachers of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Mixed Methods Study. *The University of Alabama*. (<https://www.proquest.com/openview/238beb2c958e7abc6b6ab6f4ce83e7d3/1?cbl=18750&diss=y&pq-origsite=gscholar>)
- [61] Creswell, J., & Poth, C. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (4e). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.
- [62] Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1988). Do inquiry paradigms imply inquiry methodologies. *Qualitative Approaches to Evaluation in Education*, 1(1), 89-115.
- [63] Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Sage publications.
- [64] Campado, R. J., Toquero, C. M. D., & Ulanday, D. M. (2023). Integration of assistive technology in teaching learners with special educational needs and disabilities in the Philippines. *International Journal of Professional Development, Learners and Learning*, 5(1), ep2308. <https://doi.org/10.30935/ijpdll/13062>
- [65] Harrison, M. G., King, R. B., & Wang, H. (2023). Satisfied teachers are good teachers: The association between teacher job satisfaction and instructional quality. *British Educational Research Journal*, 49(3), 476-498. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3851>