

TRIUMPHS IN EDUCATION: SUCCESS STORIES OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING NEEDS

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of students with special learning needs within the Schools Division Office of Cotabato using a qualitative phenomenological approach. Seventeen participants were interviewed to gain insights into the factors that influence their academic and personal success. Data were analyzed through thematic analysis, revealing that supportive multi-sensory teaching, collaborative learning communities, engagement through activities, and positive reinforcement and confidence-building are contributory factors to academic and personal success for these students. Meanwhile, safe, flexible learning spaces, structure self-study, empowerment through accommodation, and collaborative support were found to be effective strategies and accommodations for supporting their success. Moreover, relentless positive reinforcement, high aspiration and goals, holistic support network, and personalized care are important aspects that are offered by educators and support systems to facilitate the success of students with special learning needs. Creating safe, adaptable classrooms that promote belonging and accessibility is essential. Positive reinforcement, high expectations, and personalized goals help students recognize their potential and build a positive self-concept. Ultimately, education must be inclusive, empowering, and deeply personalized that is characterized by home-school collaboration, teacher preparedness, and environments that celebrate diversity. This holistic approach ensures academic success while cultivating confidence, independence, and self-efficacy, reflecting research that values the comprehensive development of the whole child for equitable learning outcomes.

Keywords: Qualitative Phenomenology, Special Learning Needs, Inclusive Education, Thematic Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The right to education is a fundamental human right recognized by the Philippine Constitution and international conventions, extends beyond mere enrollment for students with special needs (Alcazar, 2023). It encompasses equitable access to quality education within an inclusive environment. The Philippines has made strides in promoting inclusive education through policies like the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (Republic Act No. 10533) and Department of Education (DepEd) Order No. 72, s. 2009, which provide guidelines for inclusive education programs. These policies aim to ensure that students who may have needs are integrated into mainstream classrooms alongside their typically developing peers, receiving the necessary support and accommodations to thrive.

Despite these legal and policy frameworks, students who have special needs in the Philippines encounter some challenges in their educational journey. Access to education goes beyond physical accessibility to school facilities and includes access to appropriate learning resources, assistive technologies, and qualified educators. While progress were made in increasing enrollment rates for students who have special needs in their lives, concerns persist regarding the adequacy of infrastructure, the availability of specialized equipment, and the training of teachers to effectively cater to diverse learning needs (Allam & Martin, 2021; Gloria, Pelayo, & Castro, 2024).

Furthermore, true inclusivity goes beyond just having students in the classroom. It involves creating a learning environment for students with special needs to feel included, dealt with dignity, and actively involved in learning. Studies have shown that fostering a sense of belonging, promoting social interaction, and implementing pedagogical practices that cater to individual learning styles and needs are crucial (Amit & Palima, 2024; Raguindin, Custodio, & Bulusan, 2021). However, challenges like social stigma, limited awareness among peers, and inadequate support systems can hinder the creation of truly inclusive classrooms.

In light of this, this study aims to uncover the educational experiences of students with special needs in the chosen locale, particularly focusing on access and inclusivity. By examining the barriers and facilitators that shape their experiences, this research seeks to offer valuable insights that can influence policy, practice, and education approaches. This knowledge can lead to more equitable and inclusive educational opportunities for all learners.

Definition of Terms

Below are the terms which are defined operationally for the purpose of readers to understand the context of the study:

Students who have Special Needs refer to individuals who are enrolled in schools and have been formally identified as have one or more learning-related challenges. It is due to these learning needs that students are required to have specialized support so that they may participate in academic activities of the school.

Academic and Personal Success refers to what composes success on the part of students such as their performance in school and their personal relations with others such as having self-esteem in spite of their situation, as well as showing indications of social integration within the school community.

Access refers to the aspect where students who have special needs have physical access to school facilities, access to learning materials, as well as access to specialized support services from the school.

Inclusivity refers to the practices and the environment of the school where students are able to participate in mainstream classes, show their presence in various activities, as well as being able to be included in programs along with their peers and educators.

Purpose of the Study

Having the right to be educated, a right that is enshrined in the Philippine Constitution and international conventions, mandates equal access to quality education for all, including students who have special needs. Inclusive education policies like the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 and Department of Education Order No. 72, s. 2009, promote the integration of students with needs into mainstream classrooms, ensuring support and accommodations. However, students who have special needs face challenges related to physical accessibility, learning resources, assistive technologies, and trained educators. True inclusivity involves valuing, respecting, and engaging these students. Barriers like social stigma, limited peer awareness, and insufficient support systems hinder fully inclusive educational settings. This study intended for the exploration of the experiences of students with special needs in Cotabato Division, focusing on school facilities, resources, inclusive pedagogical practices, and support for a conducive learning environment. By capturing their authentic voices, the research identifies facilitators and obstacles to effective inclusive education, informing policies and practices for educational equity and inclusivity for learners who have special needs.

In Cotabato, the Schools Division Office implements inclusive education for students who have special needs, guided by national policies like the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013

and DepEd Order No. 72, s. 2009. These policies are designed to facilitate the integration of students with needs into mainstream educational settings, ensuring they receive the necessary support to achieve academic success. However, despite these mandates, students with special needs in Cotabato may still face challenges related to the accessibility and adequacy of school facilities, learning resources, and the effectiveness of inclusive teaching practices.

Research Questions

The researcher employed a qualitative design to investigate the phenomenon experienced by students with special needs as they endeavor to pursue their education. The researcher focused on exploring aspects of access and inclusivity. This study shall be conducted during the School Year 2025-2026.

To be specific, the researcher sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What factors contribute to the academic and personal success of students with learning needs?
2. What strategies and accommodations have been most effective in supporting these students' success?
3. What role do educators and support systems play in facilitating success for students with learning needs?

Significance of the Study

This study, which advances the comprehension of inclusive education from the viewpoint of students with special needs, holds theoretical significance. It challenges traditional deficit-based models by focusing on students' lived experiences and perceptions, promoting a more holistic and rights-based approach to education. The study contributes to theories of accessibility and inclusivity by providing empirical data on how educational environments either enable or hinder participation for students with diverse needs. This can refine conceptual frameworks related to inclusive pedagogy, resource allocation, and educational equity. Furthermore, by grounding its findings in real-world contexts, the research bridges theory and practice, offering actionable insights that can guide policy formulation and implementation to foster truly inclusive schools.

Practically speaking, this study can be significant to the following beneficiaries:

Students can benefit from this study as this puts to light their unique experiences and needs. Through this, the support as well as the creation of inclusive classrooms which foster academic growth, self-esteem, and inclusivity may be realized.

Teachers can gain valuable insights as to how pedagogical practices and resources could affect the learning of students who have special needs. This can help them refine their teaching processes and pedagogical strategies.

School Principals would benefit from this as they can identify strengths and weaknesses in school facilities relating to inclusive education. The outcomes of this research may empower them to make informed decisions regarding the enhancement of school processes and the establishment of comprehensive support systems tailored to the needs of learners with special abilities.

Stakeholders may utilize the findings of this study to plan inclusive programs for the learning of students and address their needs. This can also help them plan and come up with best practices for students who have special learning needs in their respective schools division offices.

Future researchers can utilize the results of this study as a foundation for further inquiry when it comes to inclusive education. The study's outcomes would help in conducting future studies related to inclusive education and its related policies and pedagogies.

Theoretical Lens

The researcher made use of the Social Model of Disability Theory proposed by Mike Oliver (1986; 2013). This theory gives emphasis on the notion that disability is not primarily a result of individual impairments, rather it is a consequence brought by societal barriers, attitudes, and structures which exclude and disadvantage people who have impairment. Simply, it shifts the “problem” or “challenge” brought by disability from the person who has it towards the society.

Additionally, the Relational Model of Disability proposed by Wilson and Wilson (2003) emphasizes the dynamic interplay between an individual's impairments and their environment. This model integrates elements from both the medical and social models of disability. This approach recognizes that disability is not solely a consequence of an individual's physical or mental condition (medical model) nor solely a result of societal barriers (social model), but rather emerges from the complex interplay between these factors. Consequently, the relational model offers a more comprehensive understanding of disability, facilitating person-centered care and interprofessional collaboration. It informs policy, planning, and research by emphasizing the necessity to address both individual health conditions and environmental modifications to minimize disability and foster inclusion.

Furthermore, the philosophy of inclusive education advocates for restructuring schools to accommodate all learners, emphasizing equity, diversity, and social justice. It is rooted in the belief that every child can learn and reach their full potential when provided with appropriate opportunities, resources, and support. This philosophy promotes the participation of students with exceptional needs in regular classrooms alongside their peers, fostering equality, dignity, and

shared learning experiences. UNESCO has been a major proponent of inclusive education globally, particularly through the Salamanca Statement (1994) as cited by Das (2022), which affirmed the right of every child to quality education within their local community and underscored the significance of inclusive schools that accommodate diverse learners. This international framework has had a profound impact on national policies and legislation promoting education for all children, regardless of disability or background.

Literature Review

This section of the study provides a comprehensive compilation of studies and literature pertaining to the realities experienced by students who have special learning needs. These compiled scholarly literatures are essential to establish the context of the research.

Challenges in Handling Students with Learning Needs

Special education encompasses a diverse spectrum of conditions, including learning needs, attention deficit disorder, autism, deafness, and severe intellectual and physical needs, many of which are themselves continuum disorders. Consequently, special education has engendered extensive discourse among professionals, parents, and individuals directly impacted by these conditions.

Students with specific learning needs (SLD) encounter difficulties in blended history classrooms, as elucidated in a study conducted by Alvarado-Alcantar and Keeley (2020). They encounter challenges in utilizing Learning Management Systems (LMS) due to the absence of adequate accessibility features. Despite recognizing the potential of blended courses for their future educational endeavors, they prioritize teacher-led instruction and interactive activities over digital content. The study proposes the involvement of students with SLD in course design and the provision of training to educators on accessibility principles to ensure equitable education outcomes.

Meanwhile, Wong and Rashid (2022) delved into the intricate challenges special education teachers encounter while implementing Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for students with learning needs. Their research uncovers critical competency gaps, encompassing knowledge, skills, and attitudes, which are further compounded by the evaluation process and a pervasive lack of confidence among teachers. Moreover, the heavy workloads and inadequate training exacerbate

these issues, underscoring the urgent need for enhanced teacher training, clearer evaluation procedures, and strengthened collaboration among stakeholders to effectively implement IEPs.

Similarly, Onyishi (2022) conducted a study to investigate the implementation of inclusive education practices by educators for learners with neurodevelopmental disorders. The research uncovered substantial challenges faced by educators, primarily stemming from inadequate training, insufficient resources, and limited knowledge regarding these disorders. These challenges are further exacerbated by systemic issues such as inadequate funding and infrastructure, which impede educators' capacity to adapt their teaching methodologies effectively. The study underlines the imperative for enhanced professional development, improved resource allocation, and collaborative initiatives to enhance inclusive education practices and provide more comprehensive support for learners with neurodevelopmental disorders.

Moreover, Apriliani et al. (2024) qualitatively studied how inclusive education was managed in educational institutions. The research elucidates both successes and ongoing challenges in ensuring equality for all students. Although schools have made progress, such as optimizing the role of special education teachers to support students with special needs, significant disparities continue to exist. A primary challenge is the absence of programs designed to nurture the potential of these students, which has impeded comprehensive implementation. The study highlights the imperative for schools to adopt comprehensive management strategies, enhance resource allocation, and develop targeted programs to effectively support inclusive education practices.

Tiwari (2024) explores teachers' perspectives, beliefs, and practices regarding inclusive education in an independent private school. The study reveals that while teachers generally support inclusive practices, they encounter challenges in implementation due to limited training, insufficient resources, and varying levels of confidence in addressing diverse student needs. Educators underscored the necessity of enhanced professional development and institutional support to effectively incorporate inclusive instructional strategies into their teaching environments. The study underscores the significance of cultivating a supportive school climate, bolstering teacher training, and furnishing adequate resources to fortify inclusive educational practices.

In addition, Nordin (2024) examined the intricate challenges educators face while implementing inclusive education programs. The study identifies several key obstacles that hinder educators' ability to effectively cater to the diverse needs of students with special educational requirements. These obstacles include inadequate training, limited resources, and insufficient institutional support. Furthermore, systemic issues such as ambiguous policies and inconsistent practices exacerbate the implementation challenges. Nordin (2024) emphasizes the necessity for enhanced teacher preparation, resource allocation, and collaborative efforts among stakeholders to tackle these obstacles and improve the effectiveness of inclusive education programs in Malaysia.

Additionally, Bachtsis et al. (2024) conducted a thorough study to identify the difficulties faced by students with special needs during the transition to online primary education. The study unveiled several key difficulties, including limited access to technology, reduced student

engagement, and inadequate support systems that impede effective learning. Furthermore, students with special needs encounter heightened challenges, including impaired concentration, difficulty in adapting to online platforms, and limited access to personalized instruction. Consequently, teachers and parents encounter significant barriers in addressing these impediments due to insufficient training and resources. The study's authors propose potential solutions to enhance the online learning experience for students with special needs, including blended teaching approaches, shorter lesson durations, specialized instructional tools, and enhanced collaboration among stakeholders.

Similarly, Olayemi and Oluwaseun (2023) explore the viewpoints of educators regarding the efficacy of assistive technology in facilitating the learning of children with dyslexia. Their study emphasizes that while assistive technologies like text-to-speech tools can aid in addressing challenges related to reading, writing, and memory, their implementation is constrained by limited access to resources and inadequate teacher training. Recognizing the potential of assistive technology to augment learning outcomes, educators underscore the significance of selecting suitable tools that align with the unique requirements of each student. To optimize the efficacy of assistive technology for children with dyslexia, the authors propose augmenting teacher training, augmenting resource accessibility, and fostering collaboration among relevant stakeholders.

In agreement, Franco (2023) explores the viewpoints of educators regarding the inclusion of children with needs, underscoring both advancements and ongoing challenges. The study reveals that while teachers strongly support the principle of inclusion, significant barriers remain, including inadequate teacher training, insufficient resources, and poor infrastructure. Teachers also face challenges in adapting curricula and managing diverse classrooms effectively. The study emphasizes the need for systemic changes, such as improved teacher preparation, better resource allocation, and stronger collaboration among educational stakeholders. Franco (2023) accentuates that inclusive education in Mozambique is still evolving, requiring sustained efforts to align practices with global standards and ensure equitable access for all children.

Likewise, Kurniastuti et al. (2023) investigate the challenges and strategies employed by educators in imparting literacy proficiency to children with special needs. The study elucidates substantial impediments, including inadequate teacher training, limited resources, and difficulties in adapting instructional methods to cater to diverse learner requirements. Educators also encounter challenges in sustaining student engagement and effectively addressing individual learning disparities. To tackle these challenges, the study underscores strategies such as differentiated instruction, the utilization of assistive technologies, and collaborative efforts with parents and specialists. Kurniastuti et al. emphasize the importance of professional development, resource allocation, and tailored teaching approaches to augment literacy outcomes for children who have special needs.

In the same vein, Ferri et al. (2023) investigate the challenges of inclusive teaching particularly within the preschool curriculum. The study elucidates key impediments, including insufficient teacher training, inadequate resources, and limited infrastructure to support inclusive practices. Teachers frequently encounter difficulties in adapting the curriculum to accommodate

the diverse needs of children with needs, exacerbated by inadequate collaboration among stakeholders and a lack of clear policy implementation. The authors stress the imperative for targeted professional development, enhanced resource allocation, and systemic reforms to establish a more inclusive preschool education system in Albania.

Additionally, Prasetya et al. (2023) conducted a case study to explore the challenges encountered by a non-certified special education English teacher in teaching vocabulary to deaf students. The study identified several obstacles, including students misinterpreting words due to similar lip movements, difficulties in maintaining attention, challenges in conveying word meanings, and issues with articulation, comprehension, and memory retention. The teacher also lacked experience in using sign language and the necessity for frequent repetition during lessons. To cope with these, the teacher implemented strategies such as introducing diverse vocabulary in each session, utilizing visual aids like pictures, incorporating sign language as an alternative communication method, and engaging students through physical cues like waving or patting their shoulders to capture attention. The findings emphasize the significance of providing educators with specialized training and resources to augment their teaching efficacy for deaf students.

Further, the study conducted by Suja and Elamaran (2024) delves into the intricate challenges of implementing inclusive education in India, shedding light on the systemic, cultural, and infrastructural barriers that hinder its successful implementation. The study highlights the persistent difficulties in integrating students with needs and marginalized groups into mainstream education. Key challenges include inadequate teacher training, limited resources, societal stigma, and a lack of policy enforcement. Moreover, the study highlights the disparities between urban and rural areas, where rural schools grapple with significant shortages in infrastructure and support systems. To solve these challenges, the authors propose targeted interventions such as enhanced teacher preparation programs, increased funding for inclusive infrastructure, and community awareness campaigns aimed at combating societal biases. They emphasize the importance of strong policy implementation and monitoring mechanisms to ensure the inclusive nature of education.

Additionally, a study conducted by Rendoth et al. (2024) evaluated the efficacy of the curriculum for secondary-aged students with severe intellectual needs or profound and multiple learning difficulties in Australian specialist schools. The study was conducted based on the perspectives of 46 teachers. The findings revealed that the current curriculum is inadequate in addressing the educational and social needs of these students. Teachers identified significant gaps in curriculum design and content that feel short of aligning with the capacities and needs of the students, hindering both academic and social development. The study stresses key strengths essential for reform, such as individualized education planning and inclusive practices, while also addressing challenges which include inadequate resources, lack of proper training among its teachers, and insufficient policy support. Recommendations include revising curriculum frameworks to better accommodate diverse learning needs and strengthening systemic support for inclusive education.

Realities in Education for Students with Learning Needs

Instruction of students with special education requirements necessitates the adoption of instructional strategies and practices that are comparable to those employed in general education settings. In essence, effective teaching methodologies for typical students also prove beneficial in the teaching of students with special needs or those who exhibit learning needs.

Inês et al. (2022) studied how regular education teachers perceive professional development and practices for teaching students with learning difficulties. Key findings include widespread concern about professional development and managing diversity in the classroom. Teachers favor personalized work that enhances students' personal and social development. The study emphasizes the need for improved teacher training to cater diverse student needs effectively. Educators recognize the significance of curricular and pedagogical differentiation but acknowledge their limited preparation for its effective implementation. Continuous professional development and support are essential for providing enhanced services to students with special needs.

Additionally, the study conducted by Chidiadi Onwubiko (2024) delves into the impact of inclusiveness and contemporary teaching and learning settings on students with learning needs. This study aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4, underscoring the imperative to ensure that no child, particularly those with needs, is marginalized in the educational process. Contemporary environments, augmented by information and communication technologies, offer significant benefits as they cater to the needs of students in the present era and provide accessible learning support for students with needs. The study proposes strategies to further enhance inclusiveness within these environments, drawing upon the positive impacts that have been identified. Their study highlights the importance of creating supportive and technologically integrated educational settings for improved outcomes for students with learning needs.

Riccomini et al. (2024) conducted an intensive writing intervention specifically designed for fifth-grade students with specific learning needs (SLD) with the objective of augmenting their mathematical reasoning abilities through the medium of written expression. The intervention group significantly outperformed the control group on subtraction and division word problems requiring written solutions. Students found the intervention enjoyable and helpful, as noted in treatment interviews. Teachers suggested additional scaffolds for students needing more intensive support. The study emphasizes the importance of teaching strategies to help students with SLD articulate their mathematical reasoning in writing, improving both understanding and communication skills. Overall, targeted writing interventions support academic performance in mathematics for students with SLD.

Meanwhile, Rutherford's (2024) study uses Appreciative Inquiry to explore the educational journey of students with complex learning needs. It highlights the neglect of

compulsory education for such students in New Zealand. Through a narrative approach, the study shows how tailored strategies and supportive environments can lead to significant learning gains for marginalized students. The findings underscore the significance of acknowledging and appreciating students' distinctive strengths, rather than concentrating on their shortcomings. The study aims to inspire educators and policymakers to adopt inclusive practices that foster success for all students. Overall, Appreciative Inquiry was found uncover and amplify successful educational practices promoting equity and inclusion.

The research study conducted by Bhat, Mehrotra, and Gambhir (2023) delves into effective methodologies for teaching students with intellectual needs to engage with literary works through comparative analysis of characters. Drawing upon existing research underscoring the significance of tailored literacy programs and interactive instructional tools, such as video-based approaches, the study advocates for the utilization of the System of Least Prompts (SLP) and visual organizers. These structured supports can be progressively reduced as students demonstrate proficiency, enabling educators to adapt grade-level texts to cater to diverse learning requirements. By adopting individualized approaches, educators can foster meaningful interactions with literature, thereby enhancing engagement and comprehension among students with intellectual needs.

In 2022, Koifman advocated for professional development programs that provide teachers with certifications in gifted education and strategies to cultivate curiosity while addressing areas of challenge. The study underscores the paramount importance of tailoring classroom instruction to individual students' abilities, thereby enabling gifted learners to engage with intellectually stimulating materials while fostering self-esteem and peer recognition through creative avenues such as music or art. Furthermore, the research emphasizes the importance of supportive teacher-student relationships to mitigate feelings of isolation or misunderstanding often experienced by gifted children. By focusing on individualized support and enrichment opportunities, Koifman's work provides practical recommendations for enhancing educational outcomes for gifted students.

Oprişan et al. (2021) conducted a study to investigate the evolution of educational policies for students with needs, focusing on the transition from segregated to inclusive education (IE) frameworks. While progress has been made, several challenges remain, such as inadequate infrastructure, negative attitudes, and insufficient support. To ensure effective inclusion, supportive policies, trained staff, and community engagement are essential. The study emphasizes the need for clearer guidelines and strategies to guarantee equitable access, highlighting the importance of further research and enhancing teacher competencies to create inclusive environments.

A mixed-methods research study conducted by Alkhawaldeh and Khasawneh (2024) examines the efficacy of gamified assistive applications in augmenting engagement, motivation, and academic performance among students with learning needs. The findings reveal a substantial correlation between the utilization of these applications and improved educational outcomes. The study explores the potential of gamification as a compelling strategy for fostering inclusivity and enhancing educational attainment for students with needs. By presenting a novel strategy to

augment participation and achievement, this research provides educators and policymakers with a scalable solution to address learning challenges.

Almufareh et al. (2024) conducted a research study that proposes a conceptual model for utilizing the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance disability inclusion. The primary objective of this study is to develop AI-driven solutions that are specifically designed to improve the quality of life for individuals with needs across various domains. The model serves as a theoretical framework, emphasizing inclusivity in the design and application of AI technologies. The key findings underscore the transformative potential of AI applications, including real-time captioning, sign language translation, robotic assistance, and brain-computer interfaces. These innovations not only enhance accessibility but also foster independence and empowerment for individuals with needs. The study underscores the necessity of inclusive design principles, equitable data collection practices, and continuous monitoring to ensure that AI systems effectively address the diverse needs of the population. Furthermore, the research advocates for a systemic approach involving policymakers, developers, and stakeholders to create AI technologies that promote equity and inclusion.

A research study conducted by Mauer and Swanson (2024) investigates the efficacy of tutoring in cross-age as a strategy to enhance the outcomes of literacy for students with needs. This approach involves pairing more senior students with those who are younger peers to facilitate learning through mutual support and interaction. The research underlines the advantages of this methodology, including enhanced reading proficiency and heightened self-assurance among students with needs. Key findings demonstrate that cross-age peer tutoring establishes a supportive learning environment, fostering social interactions and academic engagement. The study proposes that this approach can be particularly effective when implemented with meticulous planning, comprehensive training for tutors, and ongoing support for both tutors and tutees.

A research study conducted by Kassim and Nordin (2024) examines the efficacy of teaching aids designed to accommodate visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning preferences for students who have special needs. The study emphasizes the significance of multisensory approaches in promoting enhanced engagement, comprehension, and retention among these students. The research findings demonstrate that integrating customized teaching aids significantly improves learning outcomes by accommodating diverse sensory preferences. Key findings suggest that the combination of visual aids (e.g., diagrams, charts), auditory tools (e.g., verbal instructions, sound-based activities), and kinesthetic methods (e.g., hands-on tasks, movement-based learning) collectively create an inclusive and efficient educational environment. It is through these approaches that not only enhance academic performance but also contribute to the holistic development of students with special needs.

Special Needs Education in the Philippines

Cagalitan et al. (2023) investigated the perceptions of teachers regarding the inclusion of learners with hearing impairments in regular classrooms. The study reveals that while teachers generally support inclusion, they face challenges such as insufficient training, lack of specialized resources, and difficulty adapting teaching process that meet the unique needs of these learners. Teachers expressed a willingness to collaborate with specialists and use assistive technologies but emphasized the necessity for more professional and institutional support. The authors recommend targeted training programs, improved access to resources, and stronger collaboration among stakeholders to enhance the inclusion of learners with hearing impairments in education.

The qualitative analysis that was carried out by Allam and Martin (2021) illuminates the intricate challenges and issues encountered by teachers in special education in the Philippines. Drawing upon the perspectives of educators, the study elucidates five important themes: the selection of suitable strategies, the provision of individualized support, the maintenance of patience and acceptance, the upholding of students' rights, and the circumvention of systemic barriers. Teachers consistently cited a deficiency in training specifically tailored to special education, inadequate resources, subpar infrastructure, and the absence of curriculum support designed to cater to the needs of students with needs. Furthermore, they underscored challenges stemming from uncooperative parents, societal stigma, and a lack of meaningful stakeholder engagement.

In 2023, Paguirigan, Paguirigan, and Ablog conducted a qualitative phenomenological study to investigate the lived experiences of special education teachers in Ilocos Sur, Philippines, during the "New Normal" phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. The research revealed the challenges faced by five special education teachers as they transitioned to modular and distance learning formats. Key themes identified included feelings of stress and burnout, inadequate training for online instruction, and difficulties in preparing weekly learning activity sheets. Teachers also expressed struggles with balancing professional duties and personal responsibilities during lockdowns. The study accentuates the significant obstacles posed by the abrupt shift to remote learning for special education, including inadequate resources and limited technical support. Recommendations include providing specialized training for virtual instruction, improving access to teaching materials, and addressing teacher well-being through systemic support.

Masongsong et al. (2023) conducted a study to investigate the correlation between teachers' training in inclusive education and their perceived efficacy in public elementary schools within Talisay District, Batangas, Philippines. Employing a descriptive-quantitative methodology with 120 teacher respondents, the research revealed a discrepancy between the level of inclusive education training and the high level of self-efficacy demonstrated by teachers in student engagement, instructional techniques, and classroom management. Most respondents were experienced female teachers exceeding 41 years of age with over 21 years of teaching experience.

The study highlights the disparity between insufficient training and strong self-efficacy, indicating that while teachers possess confidence in their abilities, their limited formal training may impede the effective implementation of inclusive practices. Consequently, recommendations include enhancing professional development programs and providing targeted training to address this gap.

A study conducted by Campado, Toquero, and Ulanday (2023) examines the integration of assistive technology (AT) into the instructional practices of learners with special educational needs and needs (LSENs) in selected schools within the Philippines. Through in-depth interviews with 12 special education teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic, the research elucidates the types of AT utilized, encompassing interactive multimedia, conventional tools, educational applications, and a limited number of high-tech devices. Teachers identified AT as a valuable tool for reinforcing learning, enhancing teaching satisfaction, and motivating students. However, significant challenges were encountered, including limited device availability, inadequate teacher training, and behavioral issues among learners. The study emphasizes the necessity for systemic improvements in AT integration, including enhanced access to advanced technologies, targeted professional development for teachers, and comprehensive support mechanisms.

In synthesizing the reviewed literature, it becomes evident that while educators demonstrate a strong commitment to inclusive education, they face significant challenges in effectively supporting learners with needs. Key issues include inadequate training, limited access to specialized resources, and systemic barriers such as curriculum gaps and societal stigma (Cagalitan et al., 2023; Allam & Martin, 2021). The transition to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these challenges, resulting in heightened stress levels, burnout, and difficulties in instructional adaptation (Paguirigan et al., 2023).

Despite these obstacles, educators exhibit high self-efficacy in engaging students and managing classrooms, even in the absence of sufficient formal training (Masongsong et al., 2023). Moreover, assistive technology has emerged as a valuable tool for enhancing learning experiences, though its integration remains hindered by limited availability and lack of technical support (Campado et al., 2023).

As a summary, what the literature suggests is that there should be comprehensive professional development programs, improved institutional support, and enhanced access to resources to bridge the gap between educators' commitment and their actual capacity to implement inclusive education effectively. Strengthening collaboration among educators, stakeholders, and policymakers is essential in ensuring a more equitable and inclusive learning environment for all students.

METHODOLOGY

This section of the study provides descriptions and explanations about the research design, research locale, research participants, sampling design, data collection, data analysis, research instrument, ethical considerations, and the assurance of the trustworthiness of the study.

Research Design

The researcher employed a qualitative research design to conduct an in-depth exploration of the experiences of students with special needs as they pursue their education (Lim, 2025). This study focused on exploring the aspects of access and inclusivity within the school environment. Through the application of qualitative methodologies, the researcher endeavors to capture the genuine voices and lived experiences of these students, facilitating their sharing of personal narratives and viewpoints pertaining to their educational trajectory.

Phenomenology is an appropriate research methodology for this study due to its qualitative approach, which emphasizes the exploration and description of the lived experiences of individuals within a specific context. (Moustakas, 1994; Frechette et al., 2020) For students who have special needs, phenomenology enables the researcher to gain profound insights into how these students perceive and navigate issues of access and inclusivity as they pursue their education. This method emphasizes capturing the authentic voices and subjective realities of participants, making it well-suited to address research questions about their experiences with school facilities and resources, the effectiveness of inclusive pedagogical practices, and the ways schools support their learning environments.

To address the diverse viewpoints and evolving insights of the participants, flexible and adaptive questioning techniques were employed. Data collection was conducted in safe and comfortable settings, fostering open and honest sharing. The analysis followed an inductive approach, gradually moving from specific individual accounts to broader themes. This approach aims to uncover patterns and deeper meanings about how students with special needs navigate and adapt within the school system.

Participants

The participants in this study were elementary learners with special needs from various schools under the Schools Division Office of Cotabato. These learners were purposively selected based on their direct experiences with school facilities, resources, and inclusive pedagogical practices within their educational settings. The study aims to include 17 students across different

grade levels to ensure a diverse representation of perspectives regarding access, inclusivity, and support in their learning environments. The inclusion criteria for this study is that they exhibit success in their academics despite their learning needs. School administrators and teachers assisted in identifying learners who may have special needs in their education. Informed consent from parents and assent from the learners were obtained in accordance with ethical research standards. These participants served as primary informants, sharing their experiences, perceptions, and coping strategies through interviews and focus group discussions. Their insights were crucial in addressing the research questions and enhancing our understanding of how schools can effectively support students who have special needs to create conducive and inclusive learning environments.

The researcher also acknowledge that there were exclusions in terms of the participants. The researcher did not include the students with special learning needs who belong to private schools as their experiences are clearly not similar with those of the public school students.

The research participants would also be allowed to withdraw in case they experience any sense of distress. They can also withdraw should they see that the questions are sensitive or too personal.

Data Collection Tools

The primary data collection instrument for this qualitative study was a semi-structured interview guide (Mashuri et al., 2022). This tool facilitates an in-depth exploration of the experiences of elementary school students with special needs as they navigate their educational trajectory. The interview guide was utilized during Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with selected student participants. Its flexible yet focused design enables the researcher to prepare core questions aligned with the study's objectives while also allowing for exploration of emerging topics. This approach ensures that key areas, such as students' access to school facilities and resources, perceptions of inclusive teaching practices, and the support schools provide to create a conducive learning environment, are consistently addressed. Open-ended questions encourage detailed and meaningful responses that reflect the students' realities. The conversational setting helps participants feel at ease, fostering honest and rich sharing of their experiences. The researcher's goal is to collect comprehensive data that illuminates both challenges and effective strategies, providing valuable insights into the educational experiences of students with special needs. Moreover, the researcher may also opt to use technology-based tools in data collection in case the chosen respondent is not able to answer without the help of a parent or guardian.

Procedures

In this qualitative study, it is the researcher who served as the main instrument for data collection and analysis, thereby shaping the depth and quality of the inquiry (Telaumbanua, 2024). Given the focus on comprehending the lived experiences of elementary students with special needs as they pursue their education, the researcher must possess skills in qualitative methodologies such as interviewing, observation, and active listening. As the sole data collector, the researcher meticulously identified relevant information from participants' narratives to maintain focus and avoid collecting extraneous data.

Meaningful, empathetic, and interactive engagement with the students is crucial to build trust and encourage openness. This allows the researcher to capture authentic insights into how these learners experience access, inclusivity, and support within their schools. Clear communication of methods, procedures, and findings were maintained to ensure transparency and contribute valuable knowledge on creating conducive learning environments for students who have special needs.

To facilitate thorough and ethical data collection, the researcher developed qualitative instruments particularly an interview (Roberts, 2020) and focus group discussion guides tailored to elicit detailed accounts of students' experiences with school facilities, resources, and inclusive pedagogical practices. These instruments underwent validation by educational experts to ensure clarity, relevance, and appropriateness for the study's objectives and the context of the Schools Division Office of Cotabato. The researcher also sought for the expert advise of the Ethics Board of the CMC to properly ascertain that the items in the interview guide are within the scope of the study and that it is aligned with ethical standards and protocols.

An informed consent form was also be prepared and reviewed to ensure it is understandable and suitable for student participants (O'Sullivan et al., 2021), many of whom may be minors. The form was comprehensively elucidate the study's objectives, the methodologies employed for data collection, the protocols implemented for ensuring confidentiality, and the rights afforded to participants, including their autonomy to consent and withdraw from the study at any time. Parental or guardian consent were obtained in accordance with ethical standards.

After obtaining approval from school administrators and local education authorities, purposive sampling was employed to select 17 elementary school students with special needs who have at least one academic year of experience in their schools as well as displaying academic achievement despite of their special learning needs. The goal is to ensure diversity in grade levels and backgrounds to capture a broad range of perspectives. Participants shall be made aware about the study's purpose and processes, and their consent and assent was obtained before data collection.

Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in comfortable, private settings within or near the schools to facilitate open and honest sharing of experiences, challenges, and coping strategies. The researcher adopted a conversational and empathetic approach to encourage

students to reflect on their educational journeys. With participants' permission, sessions were audio-recorded (Resnik et al., 2024) and later transcribed by manner of word-for-word, and then supplemented by notes taken down from the filed thereby capturing non-verbal signals and contextual information.

The guide used in the interview focused on the core research questions, exploring students' experiences with school facilities and resources, their perceptions of effective inclusive teaching practices, and the ways schools support them to create a conducive learning environment. Throughout the process, strict ethical standards were adhered to, including the protection of participants' confidentiality. Pseudonyms were used, and secure data storage measures were implemented (Itzik & Walsh, 2023). Additionally, participants received tokens of appreciation for their time and contributions.

Following data collection, the researcher conducted an inductive analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns. Data from interviews, focus groups, and observations were triangulated so as to guarantee that a credible and rich findings were acquired. By following these rigorous steps, the study aims to authentically represent the voices of students who have special needs, providing valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders committed to improving access, inclusivity, and support in educational settings.

Data Analysis

The research employed thematic analysis to interpret the data gathered qualitatively from interviews and the focus group discussions (Naeem et al., 2024). After transcribing all responses, the researcher meticulously reviewed the transcripts to identify key statements and narratives that illuminate the experiences of elementary school students with special needs as they navigate their educational journey. This initial step facilitates the researcher's profound understanding of the students' perspectives, particularly concerning access to school facilities, inclusive teaching methodologies, and the types of support provided by educational institutions.

Subsequently, the researcher identified and label pertinent sections of the data that align with the study's primary research questions. These codes facilitated the segmentation of information into manageable components (Schreier, 2024), which were subsequently categorized into overarching themes. These themes are anticipated to encompass important aspects of students' experiences, such as obstacles to resource access, effective teaching practices that foster inclusion, and strategies employed by schools to cultivate a positive learning environment.

Throughout the analysis, the researcher continuously reviewed and modified the codes and themes, ensuring their accurate reflection of the voices and experiences of the participants. By comparing responses from diverse students, the researcher was able to discern both shared experiences and distinctive perspectives.

Lastly, the researcher developed comprehensive descriptions and interpretations for each theme, interweaving the students' narratives to present a comprehensive understanding of their educational trajectories. This approach not only unveils the challenges encountered by students with special needs but also provides valuable insights for enhancing access and inclusivity within educational settings.

Ethical Considerations

Given that this qualitative study centers on the experiences of elementary school students with special needs as they navigate their educational journey, it is essential to address a multitude of ethical considerations. The sensitive and personal nature of their educational endeavors necessitates the researcher to uphold the highest ethical standards to safeguard the rights, dignity, and well-being of all participants throughout the research process.

Social value. The researcher ensured the usefulness of this study by means of providing properly detailed research results which can be utilized by the Schools Division Office of Cotabato. The researcher communicated the results of the research to the schools so that they can also be aware of the realities experienced by students who have special needs so that they can give appropriate action.

Voluntary Participation and Informed Consent. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, with informed consent being prioritized to respect the autonomy of elementary school students with special needs (Nii Laryeafio & Ogbewe, 2023). In the informed consent to be accomplished by the students, it indicates that the researcher properly explained what the study is about and what their roles in the study would be. It also provides evidence that the students were informed of their rights as participants of this study. The mode of assent was in written format so that parents would also be made aware that their children would voluntarily participate in the study. All participants received comprehensive, age-appropriate explanations regarding the study's objectives, procedures, and their respective roles. They were assured of their right to make informed decisions about participation and may withdraw at any time without incurring any adverse consequences (Dahal, 2024). For students who are minors, parental or guardian consent were obtained to ensure compliance with ethical standards (Armijo & Willatt, 2024). The parental consent is another form that the researcher collected where it shows that the parents authorize the researcher to conduct the study among their children. The consent process encompassed detailed information regarding the data collection, storage, and utilization processes, emphasizing the importance of confidentiality and anonymity through the use of pseudonyms and secure data management practices.

Vulnerability of Research Participants. Given the potential challenges faced by elementary school students who have special needs, including inadequate learning environments, social stigma, and emotional stress, the study prioritized sensitivity to their vulnerability and emotional well-being. The researcher conducted all interactions with empathy and care, allowing participants to skip any questions they find uncomfortable or too personal. Attention was paid to signs of distress, and the researcher was prepared to pause or stop interviews if necessary. Ensuring the emotional safety of the students was the primary concern, and the study avoided any questions or procedures that could cause unnecessary harm or discomfort beyond what is essential to understanding their educational experiences.

Risks, Benefits, and Safety. The study adhered to the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence, thereby ensuring that the researcher minimizes any potential risks or burdens for elementary school students with special needs. Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in safe, comfortable, and accessible settings. When necessary, secure online platforms may also be utilized. The researcher created a supportive environment that encourages open and honest sharing while respecting participants' boundaries. The primary objective of this study is to document the challenges encountered by these students and their resilience and adaptive strategies. In case that a research participant would show signs of distress, the researcher paused the interview. She then called the teacher or even a guidance counselor to provide necessary intervention. They then assessed whether the student would be allowed to continue or perhaps to discontinue in the participation in this study.

Privacy and Confidentiality. To safeguard the privacy of elementary school students with special needs participating in the study, stringent measures of anonymity and confidentiality were implemented. All data, including audio recordings, transcripts, and notes, were securely stored in password-protected files, granting access only to the researcher. To prevent any connection between responses and individual students or schools, identifying details were removed or anonymized in all reports and publications. Additionally, the study adhered fully to applicable data protection regulations to ensure confidentiality and minimize any risks associated with disclosure.

Justice. The principle of justice was upheld by ensuring that all students with special needs are treated equitably and with respect. This means providing them with equal opportunities to share their experiences, regardless of their background, grade level, or academic performance. Participants did not face any undue pressure or discrimination and received appropriate recognition for their time and contributions. The selection process was transparent and inclusive, aiming to capture a diverse range of student perspectives. For participants who are unable to read or write (in case there is), the participant may select someone who can assist him/her in reading and in the

explanation of the consent forms. Also, appropriate recognition on the part of the participants would be guaranteed. This means that the research ensured that the participants are provided with tokens which they can use in their studies at school. This way, the researcher could express her gratitude towards them and for the time they shared in telling their stories.

Transparency. The researcher remained transparent throughout the study by maintaining open and honest communication with the students, their families, and relevant school authorities such as the school administrators, the teachers, and the class advisers. The researcher clearly explained the study's objectives, methods, and potential uses. After the research is completed, a summary of the findings were shared with participants, schools, and local education stakeholders to build trust and demonstrate respect for their involvement and for giving the researcher the chance to document their experiences.

Qualification of the researcher. The researcher's qualifications are crucial for the study's quality. To ensure competence, the investigator actively sought ongoing guidance and feedback from academic mentors and experts in qualitative research and education. Throughout the study, reflexivity was practiced recognizing and manage any personal biases or assumptions that may influence data collection and analysis. This approach enhanced the study's credibility and uphold its ethical standards. The researcher has also gained some experience in the conduct of research through the classes attended in the graduate school as well as by means of being exposed to seminars pertaining to research. This way, the researcher also gained a sense of what to do especially in the conduct of qualitative studies. Likewise, the researcher also encountered some students with special needs in the past, enabling her to see that there are indeed some challenges that they faced but through dedication, they were able to finish their studies

Adequacy of Facilities. The adequacy of the facilities was meticulously evaluated to ensure the well-being and safety of the students with special needs participating in the study. All data collection were conducted in physically accessible, private, and supportive settings that promote open and forthright communication. These environments, whether in-person or virtual, was designed to minimize distractions and establish a secure atmosphere, enabling students to freely share their experiences regarding access to school facilities, inclusive teaching methodologies, and the support they receive.

Community Involvement. To foster community engagement, the researcher collaborated with local educational stakeholders, including school administrators, educators, and parent groups, to ensure that the research is grounded in the authentic context of students with special needs. This collaborative approach translated study findings into practical actions that improve access to school facilities, promote inclusive teaching practices, and strengthen school support for a conducive learning

environment. Sharing results with key community members can inform policies and interventions that better support students with special needs' educational success and well-being.

By meticulously adhering to fundamental ethical principles, including voluntary participation, informed consent, sensitivity to participants' vulnerabilities, confidentiality, beneficence, justice, transparency, researcher competence, appropriate facilities, and active community involvement, researchers create a respectful, safe, and empowering environment for students with special needs. This ethical commitment safeguards the rights and well-being of participants while providing valuable insights that can enhance educational experiences and promote inclusivity in resource-limited environments.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the reliability of the study's results, the researcher must adhere to the principles of trustworthiness established by Lincoln and Guba (1985). They noted that there are four dimensions to ensure trustworthiness and these are credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability. The researcher guaranteed that these criteria are considered by also ensuring that the different steps of each were realized.

Credibility of this study was established through rigorous and sustained engagement with students with special needs. This enabled the researcher to develop a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of their educational experiences related to access and inclusivity. To achieve this, various strategies were employed to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings.

First, prolonged interaction with participants enabled the researcher to capture the complexity of their lived experiences (Dado et al., 2023) within the context of special needs education. Data triangulation was implemented by collecting information from diverse sources, such as individual interviews and focus group discussions, to cross-validate findings and mitigate bias. Subsequently, member checking was conducted, wherein preliminary interpretations were shared with participants to ascertain that their perspectives are accurately represented, thereby enhancing the validity of the data (Motulsky, 2021). Peer debriefing sessions was also conducted to obtain critical feedback and strengthen the rigor of the data analysis process (Ahmed, 2024). Additionally, the study provided rich, detailed descriptions of the learning environment and participants' experiences to reflect the contextual intricacies of inclusive education in these settings. Throughout the research, reflexivity was practiced continuously, with the researcher critically examining personal assumptions and their influence on data interpretation to maintain objectivity and depth in understanding.

To ensure the reliability of the findings, a meticulous audit trail was meticulously maintained, documenting all research decisions, data collection procedures, and analytical methods employed (Carcary, 2020). This transparent and systematic record enables tracing the development of findings back to the original data, demonstrating that conclusions are grounded in participants' narratives rather than researcher bias. Maintaining such an audit trail enhances the rigor and transparency of the research process by detailing coding decisions, theme development, and any changes made during analysis.

To preserve the authenticity of participants' responses, audio recordings and verbatim transcripts were used (Dolan et al., 2023), ensuring accurate and detailed data capture. Systematic documentation of coding and thematic analysis further supports the objectivity and dependability of the findings.

Concurrently, the **confirmability** of the findings was enhanced through triangulation by integrating multiple data sources and methodologies (Donkoh, 2023). This approach included conducting individual interviews and focus groups to corroborate the data and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of students with special needs.

To guarantee the **transferability** of the findings, the study meticulously provided comprehensive and detailed descriptions of the context. This encompassed the physical environment, the specific educational requirements of the students, and the unique circumstances under which education is imparted. Additionally, thorough accounts of the student participants' backgrounds—such as their grade levels, types of special needs, and personal experiences—were included to give a rich contextual understanding of the population studied. These comprehensive narratives facilitated the evaluation of the findings' relevance and applicability to analogous educational settings or populations encountering comparable challenges by other researchers and practitioners.

Purposeful sampling was employed to select students from varied backgrounds (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024), ensuring a representative and heterogeneous sample that captures a wide range of experiences and perspectives relating to special needs scenarios. This approach enriched the data and enhance the potential for findings to be meaningful across different contexts.

Moreover, the study's materials, including data collection instruments and analytical frameworks, as well as the results, were disseminated through detailed reports, presentations, and possibly workshops. This dissemination facilitated knowledge sharing and encourage the adaptation or application of the insights gained to other settings that support students with special needs.

By combining thick contextual descriptions, purposeful sampling, and active dissemination strategies, the research provided a strong foundation for transferability, allowing others to judge how well the findings might apply to their own contexts and

contributing to broader understanding and improvement of inclusive education practices.

Dependability was guaranteed through meticulous and comprehensive documentation of the entire research methodology, encompassing any alterations in the learning environment or variations in participant circumstances that could potentially impact the study's outcomes. This detailed record-keeping captured contextual variations and methodological adjustments, allowing for a clear understanding of how such factors may affect the data and findings.

The researcher also implemented validation checks by actively seeking participant feedback on the emerging findings, ensuring that their experiences are accurately and consistently represented. In addition, peer reviews were conducted to corroborate the reliability and consistency of the results, providing an external perspective that helps identify potential weaknesses or biases in the analysis.

This continuous evaluation process ensures that the research methodologies remain logical, transparent, and adaptable to contextual changes. This maintains the integrity and trustworthiness of the data. By upholding ethical standards and methodological soundness, the study reinforces the dependability of the findings throughout the research process.

Potential Research Bias

To guarantee the credibility of this research, the researcher ensured to report any biases that may be encountered. First, researcher bias may be encountered where the researchers' culture or assumptions about students with special needs may affect the analysis. To avoid this, the researcher practiced reflexivity. This means that the researcher had to continuously reflect on her beliefs, values, and assumptions throughout the research process.

The researcher may also encounter interviewing bias where the researcher's beliefs and attitudes could sway the process of doing the interview or even the interpretation of the participants' responses. To prevent this from happening, the researcher employed triangulation. This methodology entails the researcher's collection of data from multiple sources to facilitate cross-verification and mitigate the reliance on a single perspective in the interpretation of the findings.

Limitations of the Study

In the conduct of this study, several limitations were encountered, particularly regarding the availability of participants. Some of the identified potential participants had varying schedules and attendance patterns, which posed challenges in simultaneously gathering data. Coordinating

with them necessitated flexibility in time and approach to ensure that all participants could participate meaningfully in the research. Additionally, instances of participant unavailability due to personal or academic reasons slightly delayed the data collection process.

Another significant limitation was the requirement to secure parental consent prior to conducting the study. Given that the participants were students with special needs, formal permission from their parents or guardians was necessary to ensure ethical compliance and protect the students' rights and welfare. This process necessitated patience and meticulous communication with parents to elucidate the research's purpose and scope. While this process extended the study timeline, it was a crucial step in maintaining transparency and adhering to ethical research standards.

Despite these limitations, the study was successfully conducted with the cooperation of both students and parents. These experiences underscored the paramount importance of ethical considerations, respect for participants' circumstances, and collaboration with families when conducting research involving learners with special needs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter of the research study gives an overview of the themes and the categories that surfaced based on the thematic analysis. These were supported with literature review to establish the strength and credibility of the discussion.

Table 1 of the research results indicate the different factors which contribute to the academic and personal success of students who are identified to have learning needs. From the analysis, it was found that supportive multi-sensory teaching, collaborative learning communities, engagement through activities, and positive reinforcement and confidence-building were the themes that emerged in the students' responses during interview.

Table 1. Factors that contribute to the academic and personal success of students with learning needs

Significant Statements	Codes	Categories	Themes	Meaning
"The teacher helped me with reading. I learned more about reading."	Teacher instructional support: Direct teaching and guidance in reading and writing	Instructional Support	Supportive Multi-sensory Teaching	The students' responses imply that success emerges when learning is personalized, engaging, and supported. Teachers who use interactive methods (games, TV, example demonstrations) and give clear, patient instruction help students grasp difficult concepts. Classmates also play a key role; children feel
"It's easier to understand the lesson with the use of pictures. I wish that teacher provides lessons with examples visually."	Visual aids: Use of TV, pictures, and examples to enhance understanding			
"Teacher helps me learn how to read and so do my classmates. I really like going to school every day because I	Peer support: Classmates assisting each other, leading to motivation to attend school			

know my classmates are there and willing to help me.”		Social Support	Collaborative Learning Communities	motivated to come to school and learn when peers help each other . Family involvement further reinforces learning – for example, a mother helping with homework made a student realize the lesson was easier than expected . Enjoyable, hands-on
“When there’s group activity in the room, I really like it because we help each other finish the task.”	Collaborative learning: Group projects where students help each other succeed			
“My mom helps me with my assignments... I realized that our lesson was actually easy.”	Family support: Parents help with homework and practice at home, reinforcing lessons			
“I wish there were more hands-on activities because we enjoy them more, especially when they are like games.”	Interactive learning activities: Hands-on tasks and games make learning enjoyable (e.g. cooking, crafts)	Engagement and Motivation	Engagement through Activities	projects (like cooking or making crafts) not only teach practical skills but also boost enthusiasm and enjoyment of school . Positive classroom atmosphere, including one-on-one attention and manageable class sizes, contributes to confidence (“it feels good when the teacher helps me”) ,
“It feels good when the teacher helps me. I always feel inspired because I learn something new.”	Encouragement & confidence: Positive feedback from teacher boosts self-esteem (e.g. feeling inspired by help)			
“Teacher Sheryl taught us to write our name... Then we	Practical skills instruction: Teaching life skills (cooking,			

made ice cream and soap also.”	crafts) that build confidence and engagement			whereas overcrowded or noisy settings can be obstacles
“There are too many of us in the room... my teacher teaches me how to read and write.”	Classroom environment: Factors like class size or noise level affecting learning (e.g. “too many in the room,” prefer quiet)	Learning Environment	Positive Reinforcement and Confidence-Building	. Altogether, the data suggest that multimodal instruction (visual, kinesthetic), collaborative support, and emotional encouragement are crucial factors in these students’ academic and personal success.

Supportive Multi-Sensory Teaching

This theme highlights the importance of employing various sensory modalities in the teaching and learning process to address the diverse needs of students with learning difficulties. Through visual, auditory, and kinesthetic methods, students are able to grasp lessons in ways that suit their learning styles. This approach makes lessons more engaging and helps improve comprehension and retention.

Multisensory teaching (MSE), also known as multisensory instruction or multisensory environments, intentionally combines visual, auditory, tactile/haptic, and kinesthetic inputs to present learning materials. This approach aims to engage multiple sensory channels, ensuring that the same information is encoded and reinforced through various sensory modalities. The practice is rooted in theories of multisensory integration and meaningful learning. When multiple sensory modalities converge on a concept, neural encoding becomes richer, leading to enhanced retention and transfer of knowledge. Recent conceptual reviews have articulated multisensory integration as a mechanism that facilitates meaningful assimilation and retention by establishing connections between sensory inputs and cognitive schemas (Esplendori et al., 2022).

Also, research on multisensory environments indicates that autistic children frequently exhibit enhanced attention, diminished repetitive or self-stimulatory behaviors, and heightened engagement when permitted to interact with controllable multisensory equipment, such as lights, textures, and sounds. Studies underscore the significance of providing children with autonomy over sensory inputs as a critical factor in fostering positive outcomes.

Similarly, quasi-experimental and mixed methods studies report gains in cognitive skills, listening comprehension, and psychomotor development when multisensory learning models (including music- and movement-based multisensory activities) are embedded into instruction for young learners with intellectual/developmental differences (Gazioğlu & Karakuş, 2023).

Furthermore, Unwin et al. (2022) highlights that multisensory activities, particularly those that are interactive or provide users with control, can mitigate sensory overload or frustration. This approach enhances emotional regulation and facilitates learners' full participation in instruction. This demonstrated that controlled stimulation in sensory rooms has been linked to decreased disruptive or self-harming behaviors.

Multisensory teaching effectively supports diverse learners, particularly those with learning needs and developmental differences, by engaging multiple sensory channels to enhance comprehension and retention. By integrating visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic modalities, this approach promotes more neural encoding and meaningful learning. Furthermore, providing learners with autonomy over sensory inputs not only enhances cognitive and psychomotor development but also improves emotional regulation and engagement, ultimately creating a more inclusive and responsive educational environment.

Instructional Support

This sub-theme emphasizes the major role of educators in adapting learning materials, strategies, and activities to meet the unique needs of each student. By providing individualized attention and employing adaptive tools or techniques, educators foster an inclusive learning environment that empowers students to feel supported, capable, and motivated to acquire knowledge.

Instructional support encompasses the actions, scaffolds, resources, and environmental adjustments employed by educators to directly facilitate learners' acquisition of curricular competencies. Within classroom observation frameworks, instructional support is captured by documenting how teachers present content, guide learners' thinking, provide feedback, and foster higher-order cognitive skills. Further, in specialized and inclusive education literature, instructional support extends to encompass differentiated instruction, scaffolding, assistive technology, and other accommodations that ensure the accessibility of learning for all learners (Lerang et al., 2021).

The underlying mechanisms of instructional support are multifaceted. Scaffolding techniques are demonstrated to mitigate cognitive load by simplifying intricate information and providing unambiguous guidance, which is particularly beneficial for students with working memory or attention challenges (Zuo, 2023). In contrast, differentiated instruction and adaptive technology (AT) cater to diverse sensory and processing requirements by offering alternative learning pathways, such as visual aids, tactile materials, or auditory cues (Langelaan, 2024). Additionally, high-quality feedback, a fundamental component of instructional support, facilitates students in monitoring their progress and rectifying misconceptions. This, in turn, enhances metacognitive skills and motivation (Lerang, 2021). Collectively, these mechanisms ensure that instruction not only provides informative content but also fosters transformative learning outcomes, enabling learners to develop higher-order thinking and problem-solving abilities.

Instructional support plays a vital role in facilitating effective learning by providing customized actions, scaffolds, resources, and environmental modifications that cater to the diverse learning requirements of students. By integrating strategies such as scaffolding, differentiated instruction, assistive technology, and timely feedback, educators mitigate cognitive load, accommodate diverse sensory and processing preferences, and foster metacognition. Collectively, these components enhance accessibility, motivation, and the development of higher-order thinking abilities, thereby ensuring that instruction results in meaningful and transformative learning experiences for all students.

Collaborative Learning Communities

This theme underscores the important role of social interaction and cooperation in fostering academic and personal development among students with learning needs. Collaborative learning environments foster a sense of belonging and mutual respect among students. By working together and sharing knowledge, students develop a positive attitude towards learning and actively participate in class discussions.

Collaborative learning communities are needed in supporting students with special needs by fostering an inclusive environment that values and harnesses the diversity of learning abilities (Khanna & Bhola, 2023). These communities consisting of educators, peers, specialists, and even parents have to collaborate to ensure that each learner receives the requisite support for academic, social, and emotional success.

For students with special needs, such collaboration fosters a sense of belonging, facilitating their acceptance and value within the learning environment. This emotional support bolsters self-esteem and motivation to actively participate in learning activities. Moreover, group engagement enables students to acquire social communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills, which are frequently challenging domains for individuals with special needs (Mastam & Zaharudin,

2024). Collaborative settings also provide peers with opportunities to serve as models, facilitating natural observation and imitation of appropriate behaviors and learning strategies.

Collaborative learning communities provide comprehensive support for students with special needs beyond academic assistance. They foster social and emotional development, equipping students with essential skills for success both within and outside the educational environment.

Social Support

This sub-theme underscores the profound emotional and psychological significance of peer relationships. The presence of understanding and supportive classmates and teachers empowers students to overcome feelings of isolation and inadequacy. Such social support not only bolsters their self-confidence but also enhances their communication abilities and cultivates a positive outlook towards learning.

Social support plays a critical role in the development and well-being of students with special needs (Fu et al., 2022). It provides them with the emotional, psychological, and academic encouragement necessary for their academic success. Social support encompasses the assistance and understanding that students receive from teachers, peers, family members, and the broader school community (Allen et al., 2021).

For learners with special needs, social support fosters a sense of belonging and security, mitigating feelings of isolation or inadequacy that can arise from learning differences (Long & Guo, 2023). When students feel accepted, understood, and supported, they develop greater confidence and motivation to participate in classroom activities and overcome academic challenges (Chen et al., 2023).

Social support also enhances the emotional resilience of students with special needs (Yildirim et al., 2025). Through consistent encouragement and positive reinforcement, they develop effective coping mechanisms in managing frustration and setbacks (Bondarchuk et al., 2024). Teachers and peers who demonstrate empathy and patience create a supportive environment where students feel comfortable expressing themselves without fear of judgment (Romanovska & Novak, 2024). Additionally, peer support programs, such as buddy systems or group learning, assist students in developing their communication and interpersonal skills, which are crucial for their social and emotional growth (Baria & Gomez, 2022).

The presence of strong social support networks has significant implications for the education of students with learning needs (Saeed et al., 2023). It encourages educators to adopt inclusive and compassionate teaching practices that prioritize both emotional well-being and academic achievement. Schools that prioritize social support foster a culture of care and understanding, ensuring that the diverse needs of students are comprehensively addressed. Lastly,

social support empowers students with special needs to reach their full potential, not only as learners but also as valued members of the school community.

Engagement Through Activities

This theme emphasizes the significance of active participation in learning activities in fostering motivation and academic achievement. Students with learning challenges often respond favorably to lessons that incorporate physical movement, creativity, and practical applications. These activities not only maintain their engagement but also facilitate the connection between abstract concepts and tangible experiences.

Engagement through activities is important for students with special needs, as it offers them hands-on, meaningful learning experiences that captivate their attention and enhance comprehension (Chisunum & Nwadiokwu, 2024). When students actively participate in activities, whether through games, projects, role-playing, or interactive lessons, they become more motivated and invested in their learning journey. For students with special needs, such engagement is particularly advantageous because it accommodates diverse learning styles and facilitates learning through doing rather than solely relying on abstract instruction (Yang, 2024). Activities that incorporate movement, visual aids, or collaboration render lessons more accessible and enjoyable, enabling these learners to grasp intricate concepts more effectively.

Participatory activities also contribute to the development of essential life skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving (Jeyapriya & Jayachithra, 2024). As students interact with their peers, they practice social behaviors, acquire the ability to share ideas, and cultivate self-confidence (Saroyan, 2021). This sense of involvement not only promotes academic growth but also fosters emotional and social development, which are critical areas for students with special needs. Furthermore, activities that provide immediate feedback and recognition for effort help sustain focus and encourage persistence, even in the face of challenges.

The implications of engagement through activities for the education of students with learning difficulties are substantial. Educators must design lessons that are dynamic, inclusive, and tailored to the abilities of their students, incorporating multisensory and experiential learning strategies. Schools that prioritize activity-based learning create an environment where all learners feel capable of contributing and achieving success (Thaqi & Atanasoska, 2025). Furthermore, engaging students through purposeful activities transforms learning from a passive process into an empowering experience, enabling students with special needs to build confidence, independence, and a genuine passion for learning.

Engagement and Motivation

The sub-theme underscores the notion that learning acquires greater significance when students actively participate in the learning process. When engaged, students demonstrate heightened focus, perseverance, and enthusiasm. Consequently, activity-based learning holds the potential to substantially enhance both academic performance and emotional well-being of students with learning challenges.

Engagement and motivation are major components in the education of students with special needs, as they catalyze active participation, perseverance, and a positive disposition towards learning (Sharma & Sarkar, 2024). When students are engaged, they are mentally and emotionally immersed in their activities; when they are motivated, they possess the internal drive to persist in learning despite obstacles (Ismail & Ajabr, 2025). For students with special needs, sustaining engagement and motivation can be more challenging due to learning barriers, yet these factors are fundamental for their success. A motivated and engaged student is more likely to exhibit focus, retention of information, and demonstrated improvement both academically and behaviorally (Thaqi & Atanasoska, 2025).

Teachers play a crucial role in fostering engagement and motivation by designing lessons that are pertinent, captivating, and aligned with students' individual strengths and interests (Merdiaty & Sulistiasih, 2024). Incorporating interactive strategies, technology, and real-world applications can enhance the meaning and enjoyment of learning (Hsbollah & Hassan, 2022). Positive reinforcement, acknowledgment of effort, and opportunities for success further boost motivation, assisting students in developing a sense of competence and self-worth. When students experience success, even in minor tasks, they become more inclined to learn and participate in future endeavors.

Educators must transcend conventional teaching methods and adopt differentiated and inclusive strategies that cater to diverse abilities and interests (Hidayah, 2025). Schools should also cultivate a supportive environment that values effort and progress as equally significant as achievement. Finally, when engagement and motivation are sustained, students with special needs become more confident, independent, and resilient learners who perceive education not as a challenge, but rather as an opportunity for growth and self-discovery.

Positive Reinforcement and Confidence Building

The theme underscores the significance of acknowledging students' accomplishments and fostering an encouraging learning environment. Students with special educational needs derive substantial benefits from positive reinforcement, commendation, and recognition of their progress, irrespective of its magnitude. Such reinforcement bolsters their self-esteem and instills a sense of perseverance in the face of obstacles.

Positive reinforcement and confidence development are fundamental components in supporting the academic and emotional growth of students with special needs (Laird, 2023). Positive reinforcement entails recognizing and rewarding desirable behaviors or accomplishments, thereby encouraging students to repeat them. For learners with special needs, this approach fosters motivation and contributes to the formation of constructive learning habits (Maisarah, 2024). When educators acknowledge their efforts through praise, tokens, or simple affirmations, students feel valued and capable, which significantly enhances their self-esteem. Confidence development, conversely, empowers them to believe in their own abilities and embrace new challenges with a positive outlook.

Positive reinforcement and confidence development in the education of students with learning needs are extensive. Educators must intentionally establish a supportive classroom environment where errors are perceived as opportunities for learning, and every effort is acknowledged. Schools should also adopt inclusive policies that emphasize growth, perseverance, and encouragement over comparison and criticism. By reinforcing positive behavior and fostering confidence, educators assist students with special needs in realizing their potential, cultivating a passion for learning, and perceiving themselves as capable and successful individuals both within and outside the classroom.

Learning Environment

The sub-theme points to the importance of a classroom climate that promotes acceptance, safety, and emotional support. When students feel valued and secure, they are more willing to take risks, express themselves, and engage in learning. A positive environment helps them develop resilience, self-confidence, and a genuine love for learning.

The learning environment exerts a critical influence on the educational experiences of students with special needs (Molina Roldán et al., 2021). A well-structured, inclusive, and supportive environment fosters a sense of safety, value, and readiness for learning among these students (Medina, 2025). It encompasses not only the physical setup of the classroom but also the emotional and social atmosphere created by teachers and peers. For students with special needs, an accessible and organized space minimizes distractions, promotes concentration, and encourages participation (Álvarez-Guerrero et al., 2021). When the environment is adapted to accommodate diverse learning requirements such as through visual aids, assistive technology, flexible seating, and clear routines, it empowers students to navigate learning tasks with greater confidence and independence.

Beyond the physical setting, the emotional climate of the learning environment is equally crucial. A classroom that promotes respect, empathy, and understanding cultivates a sense of belonging among students with special needs (Makweya & Sepadi, 2025). When teachers and peers demonstrate patience and acceptance, students feel encouraged to express themselves and

engage actively without apprehension of judgment or exclusion. This positive atmosphere enhances self-esteem, reduces anxiety, and fosters meaningful relationships, all of which are essential for effective learning.

Educators must ensure that classrooms are inclusive spaces where instruction is differentiated, accommodations are provided, and collaboration among students is encouraged. Schools should prioritize professional development to assist teachers in designing and maintaining environments that support all learners, irrespective of their abilities. Through a nurturing and adaptable learning environment empowers students with special needs to attain their full potential by making education not only accessible but also enjoyable, equitable, and life-affirming.

The second table highlights on the strategies and accommodations that have been identified to be effective in supporting students' needs. The results of the analysis provided the following major themes: (i) safe, flexible, learning spaces, (ii) structured self study, (iii) empowerment through accommodation, and (iv) collaborative support system. This themes form part of the strategies which the students consider to be most helpful and beneficial to them and to their learning needs.

Table 2. Strategies and accommodations that have been most effective in supporting students' success

Significant Statements	Codes	Categories	Themes	Meaning
"Teacher always says don't be shy to speak up or ask questions."	Positive classroom climate: Teachers are patient (not angry at low scores) and prompt questions, creating a safe space to learn	Encouraging Environment	Safe, Flexible Learning Spaces	Students demonstrate that a combination of self-advocacy and supportive accommodations leads to success. They often ask for help directly (raising hands, approaching teachers) or indirectly (using classmates to communicate, having parents relay messages) when they face difficulties. Teachers
"Teacher said don't be afraid to make mistakes."	Encouragement from adults: Teachers saying, "don't be afraid to make mistakes" and			

	parents giving motivational advice (e.g. “have a goal in life”).			and families reinforce this by actively encouraging questions – teachers explicitly tell them, “Don’t be shy to ask” and “don’t fear mistakes” , while parents remind them to study and ask questions. In practice, students adopt effective learning routines: they practice independently at home and prepare before tasks or quizzes, often postponing distractions like phones until work is done. Teachers accommodate by being patient with low scores and offering extra time or guidance (e.g. allowing a student to finish writing at their own pace) . Overall, the data suggest that empowering students to speak up combined with a patient, collaborative support network (peers, teachers, family) is an effective strategy for these learners.
“Our teacher doesn’t get angry even if I get a low score.”	Positive classroom climate: Teachers are patient (not angry at low scores) and prompt questions, creating a safe space to learn.			
“I approach my teacher and have them check if my work is correct.”	“I don’t skip classes because teacher told me I am good.”			
“When the teacher says there will be a quiz tomorrow, I study first; I review before playing on my phone.”	Study habits: Students do extra practice at home, research before projects, review before quizzes, and delay non-essentials (phones) until work is done.			
“I listen to my teacher when she is talking.”	Study habits: Students do extra practice at home, research before projects, review before quizzes, and delay non-essentials	Personal Study Strategies	Structured Self-Study	

	(phones) until work is done			
“When nothing to do... I just practice writing... then I show it to my mother.”	Study habits: Students do extra practice at home, research before projects, review before quizzes, and delay non-essentials (phones) until work is done			
“I always tell my teacher what I am going through or what I feel.”	Self-advocacy behaviors: Students expressing their feelings/needs (“I always tell my teacher what I am feeling”) and volunteering for roles (teaching others, cleaning).	Adaptive Accommodations	Empowerment through Accommodation	
“Teacher lets me keep writing until I finish even if it takes a long time.”	Flexible accommodations: Teachers allowing extended time (e.g. keep writing until finished) and involving students in tasks they can do (mixing tasks)			

“Mama and Papa guide me and remind me to study well.”	Parental involvement: Parents remind them to study, help check work, and sometimes directly communicate with teachers.	Family-School Collaboration	Collaborative Support System	
“My mother always reminded me, don’t be shy to ask teacher some questions.”	Encouragement from adults: Teachers saying, “don’t be afraid to make mistakes” and parents giving motivational advice (e.g. “have a goal in life”)	Parental Involvement		
“I will ask the teacher if I don’t know.”	Help-seeking: Students proactively ask for clarification or assistance (to teacher, classmates) when they don’t understand.	Seeking Support		
“I tell my classmate to tell teacher on behalf of me.”	Communication support: Using proxies (classmate tells teacher), group chats with parents.			

Safe, Flexible Learning Spaces

The first theme underscores the paramount significance of fostering learning environments that instill a sense of security, acceptance, and comfort among students, facilitating their self-expression. Students with diverse learning requirements frequently excel in classrooms characterized by a flexible approach, accommodating varying learning paces, seating arrangements, and instructional methodologies. These environments mitigate anxiety and engender a profound sense of safety, thereby empowering students to concentrate more effectively and actively participate in the learning process.

Safe and flexible learning environments are essential for the success and well-being of students with special needs. A secure learning environment fosters trust and security, providing students with physical protection and emotional support (Nukulki et al., 2024). This sense of safety enables them to take academic risks, express themselves freely, and engage in learning without fear of ridicule or failure. For students who may experience anxiety, sensory sensitivities, or behavioral challenges, a calm and predictable environment significantly reduces stress and enhances concentration (Nyakoe, 2024). Conversely, flexible learning spaces ensure that classrooms can adapt to the diverse needs, abilities, and preferences of each learner, enabling every student to access and participate in lessons comfortably.

Flexible learning spaces may encompass varied seating arrangements, quiet corners, sensory areas, or the utilization of assistive technologies to accommodate different learning styles and energy levels (Zipf et al., 2025). Such spaces promote autonomy and inclusion, empowering students to select their preferred learning location and method. Additionally, educators can modify activities and materials to suit individual needs, fostering a more personalized and engaging learning experience. This adaptability assists students with special needs in maintaining focus and motivation while developing essential self-management and decision-making skills.

Educators and schools must intentionally design classrooms that prioritize accessibility, comfort, and inclusivity. This encompasses not only physical safety but also emotional and psychological security, where respect, patience, and understanding are consistently demonstrated (Debasu, 2023). Ensuring a safe and flexible learning spaces cultivate a supportive environment where students with special needs can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally empowered to learn, grow, and attain their full potential at their own pace.

Encouraging Environment

The sub-theme underscores how warmth, empathy, and encouragement from educators foster confidence and trust among learners. When students recognize that mistakes are considered

integral to the learning process rather than failures, they become more receptive to attempting novel endeavors and undertaking academic risks. Consequently, a nurturing and supportive learning environment serves as the foundation for both academic engagement and personal development.

An encouraging environment is fundamental in supporting the growth, confidence, and overall well-being of students with special needs (Tasiouli & Lyra, 2024). This type of environment promotes positivity, acceptance, and continuous motivation, enabling learners to feel valued and capable despite the challenges they encounter. When teachers, peers, and caregivers consistently provide encouragement, whether through praise, gentle guidance, or supportive feedback, students develop a stronger belief in their abilities (Maisarah, 2024). For students with special needs, who may frequently struggle with self-doubt or frustration, such encouragement transforms into a powerful tool that nurtures resilience, perseverance, and a willingness to undertake novel tasks.

Furthermore, an encouraging environment mitigates anxiety and establishes trust between students and educators. When learners are aware that their mistakes will not be subject to judgment, they feel more comfortable participating, asking questions, and exploring their potential (Shaughnessy et al., 2021). This emotional security leads to heightened engagement and more meaningful learning experiences. Encouragement assists students in recognizing their strengths, celebrating their accomplishments, and perceiving challenges as opportunities for growth (Merdiaty & Sulistiasih, 2024). It also fosters positive social interactions, as classmates learn to support and uplift one another, thereby strengthening the sense of community within the classroom.

Teachers must deliberately cultivate a classroom culture where compassion, patience, and positive reinforcement are consistently practiced. Also, schools should support inclusive policies and programs that emphasize students' abilities rather than their limitations (Jardinez & Natividad, 2024). An encouraging environment empowers students with special needs to become confident, motivated, and independent learners. It assists them in developing the emotional fortitude and self-assurance necessary for success not only academically but also in their social and personal lives.

Structured Self-Study

The second theme elucidates how students with learning needs derive substantial benefits from adhering to well-defined routines and structured study practices that facilitate their independent learning. Structure imparts predictability and a sense of control, enabling them to effectively manage their time and maintain organizational efficiency.

Structured self-study is a fundamental component in fostering independence, responsibility, and continuous learning among students with special needs (Bachynska, 2024). It entails a guided and structured approach to individual learning, wherein students are provided with clear objectives, step-by-step instructions, and consistent support while working at their own pace.

For students with special needs, structure offers the clarity and predictability necessary for effective focus and task completion..

Structured self-study also accommodates the diverse learning styles and paces of students with special needs. It enables them to revisit lessons, review materials, and practice skills without the pressure of maintaining pace with the entire class (Tóthová & Sedláčková, 2021). This individualized approach enhances confidence as students experience success in completing tasks independently. Furthermore, educators can utilize structured self-study sessions to provide tailored feedback and monitor progress, ensuring that learning remains meaningful and aligned with each student's abilities and objectives.

Structured self-study necessitates educators to design flexible yet organized learning materials that support autonomy while preserving accessibility (Azam et al., 2021). Schools should provide assistive tools, visual organizers, and digital resources to enhance the effectiveness and engagement of self-study. Furthermore, structured self-study empowers students with special needs to become self-reliant and motivated learners. It cultivates a sense of responsibility and accomplishment, preparing them not only for academic success but also for lifelong learning and independence beyond the classroom setting.

Personal Study Strategies

The sub-theme associated with the value of developing individualized study approaches such as breaking tasks into smaller steps, utilizing visual aids, or establishing achievable goals, are worth noting. When students are instructed to employ strategies that align with their strengths, they develop greater confidence in managing their academic responsibilities independently. This theme implies that fostering independence through structure and strategy enhances students' self-discipline and sense of responsibility toward their learning.

Personal study strategies are essential in empowering students with special needs to become more effective, independent, and confident learners (Esomonu & Ezenwosu, 2023). These strategies encompass the individualized methods and techniques employed by students to organize, process, and retain information in accordance with their unique learning styles and abilities. For students with special needs, the development of personal study strategies facilitates the overcoming of learning obstacles by aligning approaches with their strengths (Elsaadany, 2025). These strengths may include visual aids, hands-on activities, repetition, or the utilization of assistive technology. By identifying the most effective strategies for themselves, students gain a sense of control over their learning process and become more engaged and motivated in their academic pursuits.

Furthermore, personal study strategies enhance focus, comprehension, and memory retention. When students are taught to establish goals, manage their time, take comprehensive notes, or break tasks into smaller, manageable steps, they are better equipped to handle the

demands of academic learning. Personal study strategies promote self-awareness and metacognition, enabling learners to reflect on their progress and adjust their methods as necessary (Nilson & Zimmerman, 2023). This self-directed learning process not only improves academic performance but also cultivates resilience and problem-solving skills, as students learn to navigate challenges with independence and confidence.

Educators play a major role in guiding students in discovering, developing, and refining these strategies through modeling, scaffolding, and individualized instruction. Educational institutions should foster supportive environments that encourage experimentation and provide resources tailored to diverse learning profiles. Personal study strategies empower students with special needs to assume control of their learning journey. They foster independence, confidence, and lifelong learning habits, equipping students with the necessary tools to achieve success both within and beyond the classroom setting.

Empowerment through Accommodation

The third theme emphasizes the significance of adapting educational methods and resources to meet the unique needs of students, thereby unlocking their full potential. Accommodations may encompass modified tasks, extended time frames, assistive technology, or alternative assessment approaches. These adjustments are not concessions but rather strategic measures designed to promote fairness and accessibility for all students.

Empowerment through accommodation is a fundamental principle in promoting equity and inclusivity in the education of students with special needs (Pradhan & Naik, 2024). Accommodations are modifications or supports that facilitate students' access to the curriculum, demonstrate their learning, and fully participate in classroom activities without compromising academic standards. These accommodations may encompass extended time on assessments, alternative assessment formats, modified instructional materials, or the utilization of assistive technology. By providing such accommodations, students with special needs are empowered to learn and perform at their full potential, free from obstacles that hinder their progress. This empowerment fosters self-confidence, independence, and a stronger sense of belonging within the school community.

When students receive appropriate accommodations, they feel understood, valued, and capable of success (DeKorver et al., 2024). This validation mitigates frustration, anxiety, and feelings of inadequacy that can arise from unmet learning requirements. Instead of being defined by their limitations, students begin to recognize their strengths and abilities, which enhances motivation and self-esteem. Accommodations also encourage active participation and engagement, as students can concentrate on demonstrating their knowledge rather than struggling with inaccessible materials or environments. Consequently, empowerment through accommodation promotes both academic achievement and emotional well-being.

The implications of empowerment through accommodation for the education of students with learning needs are significant. Educators must adopt inclusive teaching practices that prioritize fairness and flexibility over uniformity. Schools should ensure that accommodations are implemented consistently, guided by individualized education plans (IEPs) or comparable frameworks. This approach also necessitates collaboration among teachers, parents, and specialists to ensure that each learner's unique needs are effectively addressed. Securing empowerment through accommodation enables students with special needs to thrive in an environment that celebrates diversity, supports equality, and upholds every learner's right to succeed.

Adaptive Accommodations

The sub-theme emphasizes that responsive accommodations, tailored to the individual needs of each student, foster equity and empowerment. When students receive appropriate accommodations, they feel valued and comprehended, which bolsters their motivation and academic self-assurance. This theme underscores the principle that inclusivity in education is realized not by imposing uniform treatment but by providing each learner with the necessary support for their success.

Adaptive accommodations play a critical role in ensuring that students with special needs have equitable opportunities to learn and achieve their full potential (Ruhela, 2024). These accommodations encompass adjustments in teaching methods, learning materials, assessments, or classroom environments that are meticulously designed to cater to the unique needs of everyone while simultaneously upholding the shared learning objectives for all students. Unlike one-size-fits-all strategies, adaptive accommodations exhibit flexibility and personalization, adapting dynamically based on the student's progress, challenges, and evolving circumstances. By implementing adaptive accommodations, educators create inclusive learning environments that empower students to access content in ways that harmonize with their abilities and learning preferences (Sharma, 2024).

For students with special needs, adaptive accommodations are empowering because they effectively mitigate barriers that could otherwise hinder participation and achievement (Shabir et al., 2025). Examples of such accommodations include providing audio versions of texts for students with visual impairments, offering manipulatives for those with learning needs in mathematics, or utilizing technology-assisted tools for communication and writing. These adaptive supports not only enhance comprehension and engagement but also foster a sense of confidence and independence. As students experience success through accommodations tailored to their specific needs, they develop a stronger sense of self-efficacy and motivation to continue their learning journey (Basha, 2024).

The implications of adaptive accommodations for the education of students with learning challenges are profound. Educators must demonstrate vigilance, adaptability, and proactive

approachability in identifying and implementing strategies that effectively respond to individual variations. Schools should cultivate a culture of inclusivity that recognizes accommodations not as privileges but as indispensable supports for equitable education. Collaboration among teachers, specialists, and families is also essential to ensure that accommodations remain pertinent and effective over time. Furthermore, adaptive accommodations empower students with special needs to attain their full potential, creating an environment where every learner can thrive with dignity, confidence, and purpose.

Collaborative Support System

The last theme underscores the collective responsibility of families, schools, and other stakeholders in providing comprehensive support to students with learning challenges. While the classroom environment is crucial, it is equally important to recognize the synergistic partnership between parents, educators, and support staff in fostering student success.

A collaborative support system is fundamental to the holistic growth and success of students with special needs (Lakkala et al., 2021). It entails the coordinated efforts of educators, parents, special education professionals, school administrators, and even peers working collaboratively to address the unique academic, social, and emotional requirements of each learner. This system ensures that support is consistent, comprehensive, and responsive to the student's progress and challenges. By sharing expertise, experiences, and resources, the members of this support network establish a unified approach that promotes inclusion and maximizes each student's potential (Theall et al., 2025).

For students with special needs, a collaborative support system provides stability, understanding, and encouragement. When educators and families communicate effectively and collaborate toward shared goals, students experience seamless guidance both in school and at home. Collaboration ensures that interventions are well-coordinated and tailored to individual needs. Furthermore, peer support within this system fosters social connections, empathy, and a sense of belonging, which are crucial for emotional well-being (Ng & Wu, 2025). Through this teamwork, students are not only supported academically but also nurtured as whole individuals capable of growth and success.

The implications of a collaborative support system for the education of students with learning needs are profound. It necessitates schools to adopt a culture of partnership and shared responsibility, where every stakeholder actively participates in supporting inclusion. Teachers must be receptive to collaboration and continuous learning, while parents and specialists must engage in open communication and mutual respect. A collaborative support system ensures that students with special needs receive consistent, comprehensive, and compassionate support, empowering them to thrive in a learning environment that emphasizes cooperation, understanding, and collective care.

Family-School Collaboration

In this study, the theme “family-school collaboration” refers to a purposeful and ongoing partnership between educators and family members that prioritizes the student’s needs, progress, and well-being. This collaboration extends beyond occasional parent-teacher meetings; it entails a coordinated relationship where both parties share information, establish joint goals, plan interventions, and analyze outcomes. In the context of students with learning challenges, effective collaboration involves schools inviting families into decision-making processes, such as Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and classroom strategies. Conversely, families are regarded as experts in their child’s strengths, routines, and responses to support. When collaboration is robust, teachers gain valuable insights into a child’s home routines, medical requirements, and motivational factors. Conversely, families gain clarity regarding instructional approaches, anticipated outcomes, and effective strategies for reinforcing learning at home.

Family-school collaboration is a fundamental component of effective education for students with special needs. It establishes a cohesive support system that bridges the gap between home and school, facilitating personalized learning and development (Barton et al., 2021). When families and educators collaborate, they share valuable insights regarding the student’s strengths, challenges, and learning preferences. This collaborative approach leads to more tailored and effective interventions.

By partnering, families and educators reinforce school goals at home, ensuring consistency and stability that is particularly beneficial for students with special needs (Passmore & Zarate, 2021). Open communication, mutual respect, and shared decision-making foster trust and empower both parents and teachers to actively contribute to the child’s academic and emotional growth.

For students with special needs, family-school collaboration provides a sense of security and continuity (Pearson et al., 2022). When parents actively participate in their child’s education, including attending meetings, contributing to individualized education plans (IEPs), and communicating regularly with teachers, students experience a sense of support from both home and school environments. This consistent encouragement enhances their confidence, motivation, and sense of belonging. Additionally, family-school collaboration aids in identifying and addressing issues promptly, ensuring that appropriate strategies, accommodations, and resources are implemented to support the student’s unique needs.

The significance of family-school collaboration in the education of students with learning needs is profound. Educators must establish open channels of communication, valuing the family’s insights and experiences as essential contributions to the child’s progress. Schools should implement inclusive policies and programs that encourage parental engagement and partnership. Collaborative efforts between families and schools foster a more cohesive, empathetic, and

effective educational environment. This environment nurtures students with special needs not only academically but also emotionally, fostering resilience and lifelong confidence.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement in education refers to the active and informed participation of parents or primary caregivers in their child's learning journey. This involvement encompasses a range of activities, including establishing regular study schedules, engaging in reading sessions with children, advocating for assessments or accommodations, and providing opportunities for enrichment through attendance at school events or participation in classroom activities. For learners with identified needs, parental involvement serves as a crucial link between school interventions and consistent practice at home. When parents gain a comprehensive understanding of their child's learning profile and the rationale behind the strategies employed in the school setting, they can effectively reinforce skills such as decoding techniques, mathematical problem-solving, and social script rehearsal. This reinforcement can be achieved in a manner that feels natural, manageable, and less overwhelming for both parents and children.

Parental involvement plays a pivotal role in the educational attainment and holistic development of students with special needs (Marasigan-Pagkalinawan & Cordova, 2024). When parents actively participate in their child's educational journey, they assume a crucial partnership in reinforcing learning objectives, providing emotional support, and ensuring that educational goals are achieved both within the home and school settings. For students with special needs, consistent parental involvement strengthens the link between learning environments, facilitating smoother and more purposeful transitions (Kerubo, 2024). Engaged parents gain a comprehensive understanding of their child's abilities, challenges, and progress, enabling them to collaborate more effectively with educators and specialists in crafting strategies tailored to their child's unique requirements.

Furthermore, parental involvement fosters a strong sense of security and motivation among students (Liu et al., 2024). When children perceive their parents as interested and supportive of their education, they are more inclined to develop positive attitudes towards learning and perseverance. Parents who provide encouragement, monitor schoolwork, and acknowledge and celebrate achievements, regardless of their magnitude, contribute to building their child's confidence and self-worth (Elshanum, 2024). Additionally, parental participation in school meetings, special education planning, and extracurricular activities ensures that the child's voice and needs are adequately represented in all educational decisions.

The implications of parental involvement for the education of students with learning challenges are extensive. Educators and schools must proactively promote partnerships with parents by maintaining open communication channels, offering guidance, and providing opportunities for meaningful engagement. When parents are empowered to assume an active role,

they assume the role of advocates not only for their individual child but also for inclusive practices within the school community. Further, robust parental involvement nurtures a collaborative and supportive learning environment that enhances academic achievement, emotional well-being, and lifelong confidence among students with special needs.

Seeking Support

Seeking support encompasses proactive actions undertaken by students, families, and educators to identify and utilize resources beyond the immediate classroom setting. This includes consulting with specialists such as school psychologists, speech-language pathologists, and learning support teachers, accessing community services, or engaging in peer networks. For families, seeking support may involve requesting diagnostic assessments, applying for assistive technologies, or connecting with parent support groups. For students, it entails requesting clarifications, utilizing office hours, or accessing scaffolded materials. In essence, seeking support involves the active utilization of both formal and informal resources to overcome obstacles to learning.

Seeking support is a fundamental aspect of assisting students with special needs in achieving success and well-being throughout their educational journey (Jabery & Arabiat, 2024). It entails recognizing when additional assistance, resources, or guidance is necessary and reaching out to educators, specialists, peers, or family members for support. For students with special needs, seeking support is not indicative of weakness but rather an empowering step towards growth and self-awareness. It ensures that they receive the appropriate interventions, accommodations, and emotional support required to overcome challenges and attain their full potential. When educators and families encourage students to seek assistance when needed, they foster independence, self-advocacy, and resilience (Roper, 2024).

For teachers and caregivers, seeking support also entails collaborating with professionals such as special education teachers, counselors, and therapists to effectively address each student's unique needs (Tancredi et al., 2023). This collaborative approach leads to more effective teaching strategies, early identification of learning difficulties, and well-coordinated interventions. Similarly, when students are encouraged to openly communicate their struggles, they develop trust in their surroundings and feel reassured that assistance is available. This emotional security reduces anxiety and boosts their confidence in confronting academic and social challenges.

The implications of seeking support for the education of students with learning needs are substantial. Schools must establish a culture where seeking help is encouraged and valued, not stigmatized. Teachers should emulate this behavior by demonstrating openness to collaboration and continuous learning. Families, too, must assume active roles in seeking the appropriate resources and professional advice for their children. Ultimately, promoting the habit of seeking support equips students with special needs to become proactive and self-assured learners,

individuals who acknowledge that success is not solely achieved through self-reliance, but rather through recognizing the appropriate times and methods to seek assistance.

Table 3 presents the role of educators and support system in facilitating the success of the students who have learning needs. From the analysis of the data, the following themes were found: (i) relentless positive reinforcement, high aspirations and goals, holistic support network,

Table 3. What role do educators and support systems play in facilitating success for students with learning needs

Significant Statements	Codes	Categories	Themes	Meaning
“Teacher always says I can do it, just study and don’t be absent.”	Encouragement	Positive Feedback Loop	Relentless Positive Reinforcement	The data show that educators and support systems actively cultivate perseverance and confidence. Teachers play a central role by encouraging students relentlessly – repeatedly telling them “you can do it” or praising them publicly when they improve . This positive reinforcement
“I got low grades... but I didn’t get discouraged...I put an effort... I’m happy because Teacher tells me I’m very good.”	Resilience & praise			
“After I write my name... teacher says ‘GOOD JOB!’ and reward me coloured clay”	Reward system			

Teacher gave me a star because I am doing great... Teacher said I should continue studying so I might be able to transfer to ALS.”	Future encouragement	Teacher Expectations and Goals	High Aspirations and Goals	(stars, hugs, being called “very good”) makes students proud and motivates them to continue trying . Educators also set high expectations, urging students not to skip class and to study for future goals (the promise of ALS or achieving dreams) . Importantly, many mentions of family advice (e.g. fathers speaking about life goals) highlight that parents are part of this support system, reinforcing teachers’ messages at home. The combined effect is that students learn to persist despite challenges,
“Teacher hugged me and praised me, very good gave me a star!”	Emotional support	Emotional and Social Support	Holistic Support Network	
“When I get perfect score... teacher will always recognize me, say very good and tells me to study hard more.”	Recognition of achievement			
“Teacher Sheryl always teaches me and reminded me...Teacher said I am very good!”	Guidance & praise	Personalized Instruction	Personalized Care	

				often telling themselves “I will keep fighting” or “I can do it” . In summary, educators provide tailored instruction, patience, and emotional uplift, while support systems (family/peers) echo these values, enabling students with learning needs to build resilience and confidence.
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Relentless Positive Reinforcement

The first theme emphasizes the pivotal significance of consistent encouragement in fostering the academic and personal development of students with learning needs. Positive reinforcement entails acknowledging and rewarding students' efforts, accomplishments, and progress, irrespective of their magnitude, to instill a continuous learning and perseverance mindset. When reinforcement is consistently provided and imbued with sincerity, it cultivates a sense of achievement and self-esteem among learners who frequently encounter recurring challenges in their academic pursuits. This persistent affirmation enables them to perceive learning as a positive endeavor rather than a source of frustration.

Relentless positive reinforcement is a potent strategy that cultivates motivation, confidence, and consistent growth among students with special needs. It entails the continuous acknowledgment and celebration of students' efforts, progress, and accomplishments, irrespective of their magnitude. For learners who may grapple with self-esteem or encounter frequent academic and social challenges, consistent positive reinforcement fosters a sense of value, capability, and motivation to persist. When educators and caregivers provide ongoing encouragement, praise, or tangible rewards, they establish a learning environment where students associate effort with success, fostering a mindset centered on perseverance rather than apprehension of failure (Brooks & Brooks, 2023).

This consistent reinforcement strengthens desired behaviors and academic habits over time. By emphasizing students' strengths rather than dwelling on their shortcomings, educators assist them in developing a positive self-image (Villegas et al., 2024) and resilience in overcoming obstacles. Relentless positive reinforcement also encourages students to take risks in learning, participate more actively, and engage with greater confidence. It nurtures emotional stability, mitigates anxiety, and promotes a sense of accomplishment which are essential factors for sustained learning and personal development. For students with special needs, this approach transforms the classroom into a secure environment where effort is celebrated, and every achievement, regardless of its insignificance, contributes to a broader sense of purpose and pride.

The implications of relentless positive reinforcement for the education of students with learning needs are profound. Educators must adopt a growth-oriented mindset, consistently providing constructive feedback and commending progress to sustain students' motivation (Suman, 2023). Schools should also foster a culture of positivity, where success is gauged by improvement and perseverance, not solely by outcomes. When implemented with sincerity and consistency, relentless positive reinforcement empowers students with special needs to develop self-belief, assume ownership of their learning, and persistently strive for excellence. This empowerment is facilitated by confidence, hope, and a resilient spirit.

Positive Feedback Loop

The sub-theme underscores the significance of consistent positive reinforcement in fostering a cycle of motivation and improvement. Students who receive praise and recognition are more likely to exert greater effort, resulting in further success and sustained reinforcement. This iterative process promotes intrinsic motivation, as students develop a connection between effort and perseverance with personal satisfaction and accomplishment. With relentless positive reinforcement cultivates a growth-oriented mindset, encouraging students to embrace challenges and take pride in their progress.

A positive feedback loop is fundamental in fostering continuous growth, motivation, and confidence among students with special needs (Rajapakse, 2024). This cycle commences when constructive feedback and encouragement lead to enhanced performance, which, in turn, reinforces the student's desire to persist in learning and exert greater effort. For learners with special needs, this pattern of positive reinforcement and progress is particularly potent, as it facilitates the development of trust in their abilities and instills the recognition that effort is the catalyst for success. When educators consistently provide supportive feedback that emphasizes strengths and specific areas for improvement, students cultivate a growth mindset (Yu et al., 2022).

A well-executed positive feedback loop also enhances engagement and emotional well-being. When students experience success and receive recognition for their progress, they become more motivated to participate actively and set higher personal goals (Navaitienė & Stasiūnaitienė, 2021). This ongoing process diminishes the apprehension of failure and encourages self-reflection, enabling students to discern the strategies that most effectively serve their needs. Over time, it strengthens self-efficacy which is crucial for students who frequently encounter academic or social challenges. In essence, a positive feedback loop transforms learning into an empowering experience that emphasizes progress over perfection.

The implications of a positive feedback loop for the education of students with learning difficulties are substantial. Educators must provide timely, specific, and encouraging feedback that not only highlights achievements but also delineates actionable steps for improvement. Schools should foster an environment where feedback is perceived not as criticism but rather as a means of growth and empowerment. By maintaining this continuous cycle of encouragement and progress, educators can assist students with special needs in developing resilience, self-confidence, and an enduring passion for learning by equipping them with the mindset and motivation necessary for success both within the educational setting and beyond.

High Aspirations and Goals

The second theme underscores the significance of establishing meaningful, attainable, and ambitious objectives for students with learning needs. Educators who convey confidence in their students' capabilities motivate them to set higher standards and pursue excellence (Candrasari et al., 2023). High aspirations propel learners beyond their perceived limitations and foster resilience, self-discipline, and ambition. Nevertheless, these aspirations must be realistic and supported by appropriate scaffolding to guarantee that students experience success throughout their learning journey.

High aspirations and goals are necessary for students with special needs, as they cultivate motivation, determination, and a sense of purpose in their educational journey (Agarwal, 2024). When educators and families establish ambitious yet achievable expectations, students are empowered to challenge themselves and recognize their potential beyond perceived limitations. High aspirations convey a strong belief in a student's capabilities, fostering confidence, perseverance, and self-worth. For students with special needs, clear goals provide direction and meaning, guiding them to focus on progress and celebrate every achievement, regardless of its magnitude.

Setting high but realistic goals promotes personal growth by encouraging students to take ownership of their learning (Bhardwaj et al., 2025). It equips them with resilience when encountering difficulties and instills the value of effort and perseverance. Teachers play a crucial role in guiding students toward these goals by providing structured support, feedback, and positive reinforcement. When students experience success in meeting their aspirations, it reinforces their belief in their ability to continue improving and achieving greater heights. Over time, this mindset builds self-efficacy and fosters lifelong learning habits that extend beyond the classroom setting.

The implications of fostering high aspirations and goals for the education of students with learning challenges are profound. Schools must cultivate a culture that values progress, potential, and empowerment rather than fixating solely on limitations. Teachers should design goal-setting activities that are individualized, measurable, and aligned with each student's abilities and interests. Collaboration among educators, parents, and support specialists ensures that expectations remain both challenging and supportive. Ultimately, fostering high aspirations and objectives empowers students with special needs to envision a prosperous future for themselves, a future that is defined by self-assurance, perseverance, and the conviction in their ability to attain greatness through unwavering dedication and diligent effort.

Teacher Expectations and Goals

The sub-theme, Teacher Expectations and Goals, emphasizes that teacher attitudes and expectations significantly influence student performance and self-concept. When teachers maintain positive yet attainable goals for learners, they communicate a powerful message of trust

and confidence (Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). Students internalize these expectations, which in turn shape their academic behavior, motivation, and self-belief. A supportive teacher who combines high standards with empathy creates an environment where learners are encouraged to challenge themselves while feeling guided and supported (Aldrup et al., 2022).

Teacher expectations and objectives significantly influence the academic performance, conduct, and self-perception of students with special needs. When educators establish positive, realistic, and ambitious expectations, they convey confidence in each student's capacity for success, irrespective of their challenges. These expectations shape the manner in which teachers plan lessons, provide assistance, and engage with their learners. For students with special needs, the knowledge that their teacher believes in their abilities fosters confidence, motivation, and a sense of belonging (Al-Ahmadi, 2024). It encourages them to take risks, exert greater effort, and strive to attain both personal and academic objectives.

Establishing clear, achievable objectives further enhances this process. Well-defined goals provide students with structure, direction, and a tangible sense of progress. When educators collaborate with students to establish individualized learning objectives, they promote ownership and self-determination, enabling learners to recognize and celebrate their own growth (McNaught et al., 2024).

The implications of teacher expectations and goals for the education of students with learning difficulties are profound. Educators must maintain high yet compassionate expectations that challenge students while respecting their individual pace and abilities. Schools should provide support to teachers in employing data-driven and student-centered approaches to goal setting and progress monitoring. When educators establish meaningful goals and uphold positive expectations, they foster a classroom culture that values growth, effort, and potential. This empowers students with special needs to perceive themselves not as constrained by their needs, but as capable learners who can achieve success through perseverance, guidance, and self-assurance.

Holistic Support Network

The theme underscores the intricate system of care essential for students with learning needs to achieve academic and personal success. This network comprises the collective efforts of educators, peers, counselors, and families who collaborate to address not only academic challenges but also emotional and social well-being. Students with learning difficulties frequently encounter anxiety, self-doubt, or feelings of isolation, and a holistic support network facilitates their management of these experiences.

A holistic support network is needed for students with special needs, as it comprehensively addresses their academic development, emotional well-being, social interactions, and psychological growth (Khotele, 2024). This multifaceted support system involves the collaborative efforts of educators, parents, guidance counselors, therapists, and peers, working collectively to

foster the nurturing of every aspect of a student's learning and personal growth. When students receive support from multiple sources, they develop a sense of security and belonging, enabling them to engage more profoundly in the learning process. A holistic approach ensures that interventions and accommodations extend beyond academics, recognizing the significance of mental health, behavior management, social relationships, and self-esteem.

Teachers can tailor instruction to align with individual learning styles (Emma, 2024), while parents and specialists can reinforce these strategies at home or through therapeutic interventions. Such coordination ensures consistency and continuity in meeting the student's needs. Furthermore, peers within this network provide encouragement and inclusion, contributing to the development of confidence and positive social skills.

The implications of establishing a holistic support network in the education of students with learning needs are substantial. Schools must establish partnerships between families, educators, and support professionals to ensure shared responsibility in student development. Professional development programs should equip teachers with the ability to recognize diverse needs and facilitate effective collaboration with specialists. By having a holistic support network empowers students with special needs to thrive academically, emotionally, and socially, enabling them to attain their full potential within an environment that values empathy, inclusivity, and shared commitment to their success.

Emotional and Social Support

The sub-theme underscores the significance of fostering nurturing relationships and emotional safety within the learning environment. When students experience emotional security and social connection, they demonstrate increased willingness to participate, take risks, and seek assistance when necessary. Teachers who demonstrate empathy, peers who cultivate inclusivity, and counselors who provide guidance collectively contribute to the establishment of a nurturing culture. This holistic approach ensures that support extends beyond academic pursuits, encompassing the holistic development of the learner thus empowering each student to feel valued, comprehended, and motivated.

Emotional and social support serves as a fundamental pillar for the success and well-being of students with special needs (Medabesh et al., 2024). These learners encounter challenges not only in academic pursuits but also in emotional regulation, interpersonal relationships, and self-assurance development. Providing emotional and social support fosters a sense of understanding, acceptance, and value, which is needed for their holistic growth. When educators, peers, and parents cultivate a nurturing environment, students are more inclined to express themselves freely, manage stress effectively, and actively participate in learning. This support nurtures resilience, self-esteem, and a positive self-identity.

For students with special needs, emotional and social support manifests in various forms, including counseling, peer mentoring, empathy-driven teaching, and consistent positive communication (Smigielski, 2025). These strategies facilitate the establishment of trust and meaningful connections with others, mitigating feelings of isolation and anxiety. When emotional needs are adequately addressed, students are better equipped to concentrate on academic tasks and navigate social interactions with confidence. Furthermore, fostering social skills through group activities, collaborative projects, or guided interactions empowers students to develop cooperation, empathy, and communication—skills that transcend the classroom and prepare them for real-world experiences.

The implications of emotional and social support in the education of students with learning needs are profound. Educational institutions should prioritize programs that integrate emotional learning and social development alongside academic instruction (Van Pham, 2024). Educators must receive specialized training to discern emotional cues, provide compassionate responses, and create inclusive classrooms that celebrate diversity. Additionally, involving families and counselors ensures that students receive consistent emotional reinforcement both at home and in the school environment. By means of emotional and social support empowers students with special needs to cultivate confidence, establish healthy relationships, and foster a sense of belonging—allowing them to flourish academically, personally, and socially.

Personalized Care

The last theme emphasizes the importance of recognizing that each student possesses unique learning preferences and requires individualized instruction. By tailoring teaching strategies to align with their strengths, learning styles, and pace, educators can effectively support students with diverse learning needs. Personalized care empowers educators to proactively address individual challenges, ensuring that instruction remains meaningful and accessible to all students (Bhardwaj et al., 2025).

Personalized care is necessary for students with special needs, recognizing that each learner possesses unique strengths, challenges, and learning preferences (Yevdokymova, 2025). By tailoring instruction, support, and interventions to meet individual needs, educators can foster a more effective and inclusive learning environment. Personalized care ensures that students receive attention tailored to their specific cognitive, emotional, and physical requirements, enabling them to learn at their own pace and in ways that align with their preferences. This individualized approach cultivates a sense of belonging and respect, demonstrating that their differences are acknowledged and valued rather than perceived as limitations.

For students with special needs, personalized care may encompass adapting lesson plans, providing one-on-one support, or integrating assistive technologies that enhance learning accessibility. Educators who adopt personalized care are better equipped to identify and respond

to students' evolving needs, delivering targeted interventions that promote progress (Idowu, 2024). Furthermore, when students perceive that their educators are committed to understanding them as individuals, they are more likely to develop trust, motivation, and self-confidence. This holistic sense of being cared for enhances their overall engagement and academic success.

The implications of personalized care for the education of students with learning needs are profound. Schools must adopt flexible teaching frameworks that enable educators to modify methods and materials based on individual learning profiles. Collaboration among teachers, parents, and specialists is essential to ensure that personalized strategies remain consistent and effective. Furthermore, professional development programs should educate educators in differentiated instruction and adaptive assessment techniques. With personalized care empowers students with special needs to reach their full potential by providing equitable opportunities for growth—based on compassion, understanding, and profound respect for their individuality.

Personalized Instruction

The sub-theme emphasizes the tailoring of learning experiences through differentiated methods, adaptive materials, and flexible assessments. Educators who adopt personalized instruction often utilize student data, observation, and feedback to modify their approaches, utilizing simplified instructions, multisensory tools, or scaffolded learning tasks. This personalized approach aids students in developing confidence and competence by aligning lessons with their current abilities. Furthermore, it strengthens teacher-student relationships as learners feel valued, understood, and supported. Consequently, personalized instruction transforms the learning experience from a standardized process into a compassionate, learner-centric journey that nurtures both academic achievement and self-esteem.

Personalized instruction is paramount for students with special needs, recognizing that each learner possesses unique abilities, learning styles, and challenges that necessitate customized approaches (Idowu, 2024). Unlike a one-size-fits-all methodology, personalized instruction adapts the curriculum, teaching strategies, and learning materials to meet the specific requirements of each student (Oye et al., 2024). This individualized approach enables students to learn at their own pace and in a manner that aligns with their strengths, fostering deeper comprehension and heightened engagement. For students with special needs, personalized instruction provides the structure, flexibility, and support necessary to assist them in achieving academic success while simultaneously building confidence and independence in their learning journey.

The implications of personalized instruction for the education of students with learning needs are substantial. Schools must prioritize inclusive practices that empower teachers to develop flexible and adaptable lesson plans. Collaboration among educators, special education specialists, and parents is crucial to ensure consistent support and monitoring of progress. Additionally, professional development in differentiated instruction and adaptive learning methods should be

strengthened. Personalized instruction establishes an equitable and empowering educational environment where students with special needs can flourish, unlocking their full potential through meaningful, responsive, and individualized learning experiences.