



Teaching Twice-Exceptional Students: A Phenomenological Inquiry

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the collective experiences of teachers who work with students who are twice exceptional in inclusive classrooms. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with six experienced teachers with at least five years of experience dealing with twice-exceptional learners as part of the study's qualitative research design. The results showed that the teachers encountered several difficulties and struggles while interacting with this demographic, including determining the learner's strengths and weaknesses, misconceptions about their job, lack of learning facilities, and handling their behavioral and emotional requirements. However, the teachers also mentioned feeling fulfillment and satisfaction after seeing their kids progress and achieve their goals. It also includes a sense of satisfaction with the salary and the incentives they receive. Moreover, the study highlighted the importance of teacher training and professional development in equipping educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to teach twice-exceptional learners effectively. The study concluded that addressing the challenges met by the teachers when working with this requires a collaborative effort between educators, parents, and policymakers to ensure that twice-exceptional learners receive the education they deserve.

Keywords

Inclusive education, Special education, Exceptional students, Learning difficulties

INTRODUCTION

Colorado Department of Education (2009) defines "Twice-exceptional (2e) students" as students who are identified as gifted and talented in one or more areas of exceptionality and also identified with a disability defined by Federal/State eligibility criteria: specific learning disability, significant identifiable emotional disability, physical disabilities, sensory disabilities, autism, or ADHD.

Furthermore, the goal of education should be to support instructors who work with students with learning disabilities. All programs for the professional development of teachers must include a thorough special education component. Educators play a crucial role in putting inclusive education into practice. They are seen as the cornerstones of including students with disabilities in regular classes since they are agents in the effective implementation of inclusive education (Dalonos, 2013).

However, compared to other occupations, special education instructors experience burnout at a higher rate. This is the outcome of various problems that frequently lead to these teachers quitting their positions, resulting in the absence of special education teachers and poor programming for the pupils they teach. The various disabilities of the students with whom special education teachers work have increased the profession's challenges (Wiley University Services, 2022). However, more studies on this matter must address SPED teachers' lived experiences regarding their profession.

Due to the lack of data on this study, it has been found that there is no recorded evidence here in the Island Garden City of Samal regarding this matter, which led to minimal support for the needs of the SPED teachers teaching twice-exceptional learners. The researchers sought to unearth the status of SPED teachers to identify the interventions they had made and inquire about their experiences. The result of this study would emphasize and be a catalyst for providing additional support that the SPED teachers need the most.

This phenomenological study aims to explore and understand teachers' lived experiences in teaching twice-exceptional learners. Through a deep exploration of the teachers' lived experiences, the study seeks to gain insights into how best to support teachers in meeting the unique needs of twice-exceptional learners.

At this stage in the research, twice-exceptional students are generally defined as gifted children with the characteristics of gifted students with the potential for high achievement. They also give evidence of one or more disabilities as defined by federal or state eligibility criteria. They are working with children who are twice-exceptional and present several difficulties. When assisting twice-exceptional pupils, three broad categories should be considered: instructional techniques, student-centered advice, and parental support.

The undeniable sacrifices and efforts of the teachers in handling twice-exceptional students made the researchers choose the study "Teaching Twice- Exceptional Students: A Phenomenological Inquiry. " The phenomenon in this study was to determine how and what the participants' coping techniques and strategies are in teaching these students and how they motivate themselves in handling twice-exceptional students. The researcher would like to answer the following questions:

1. What are the teacher's struggles and motivation in teaching twice-exceptional students?
2. How do teachers cope with their struggles in teaching twice-exceptional students?
3. What insights can be gleaned from teacher's experiences in handling twice-exceptional students?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

A research design is a strategy and method that helps answer the research questions using empirical data. It also helps ensure that the research aims to match the kind of analysis for the data (McCombes, 2023). The strength of qualitative research, which distinguishes it from quantitative research, is its capacity to incorporate a variety of viewpoints. When performing qualitative research, for instance, the researcher is more concerned with describing the phenomenon of interest than with measuring it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). By adding the content that these experiences lend to their perception and understanding of reality, this perspective adds value to what people may express by sharing their experiences and, in doing so, improves organizational communication and understanding (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This study used questionnaires and interviews as the primary data collection methods.

This phenomenon can only be described by documenting the study participants' experiences, such as by seeing them in action or gathering their recollections through interviews or journal entries (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Phenomenology is a highly diverse field of study. In this research methodology, the researcher seeks data explaining how people encounter phenomena and their reactions. This approach acknowledges that there is no objective reality; every person has a unique perspective on the world. This is an approach where an extensive construction process takes in the understanding and interpretation of individuals (Bacatan & Sultan, 2022).

Role of the Researchers

In qualitative research, the researcher's job is to make an effort to understand the participants' thoughts and feelings. As it entails asking people to discuss topics that may be highly personal to them, this is a complex task. In some cases, the participant's memories of the experiences being studied are current, while in other cases, it may be challenging to revisit the past. The researcher's first duty is to protect participants and their data, regardless of how it is gathered. Before starting the research, a relevant research ethical review board must approve the mechanisms for such safeguarding and make them explicit to participants. Before starting a qualitative research project, researchers and practitioners new to the field should consult an experienced qualitative researcher (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Research Participants

People who can submit data and information through the methods provided are considered research participants. Participants must agree to participate, with the agreement, and can be of any age, gender, or race (Allen, 2017). The

researchers employed a purposive sampling technique to identify the participants of this study, and they have successfully identified six (6) SPED Teachers. It was asserted that most frequently, focus groups should have 6–8 participants (The Education University of Hong Kong, 2019) since the researchers should focus on respondents' thoughts and feelings in conducting qualitative research and typically consider conducting in-person interviews.

The six (6) identified teacher participants in the Division of Island Garden City of Samal were selected since the researchers seek to obtain raw experiences from teachers who are in the field and acquire professional and standard qualification when it comes to teaching learners who are twice exceptional, there the following criteria were followed by the researchers in identifying the participants to wit: (1) participants of this study should have completed the four (4) year bachelors degree in Special Program Education, have successfully passed the Licensure Examination for Teachers and should have and/or take their master's degree specifically in Teaching SPED in any government-recognized graduate school; (2) a specific number of three (3) to five (five) years in service of teaching SPED; (3) participants should have undergone at least five (5) series of seminars within or out of the region that deals with SPED teaching, learners, and or of any related to which; and (4) participants should be a public school teacher assigned within the Division of Island Garden City of Samal.

Data Analysis

In the data analysis of the study, the researchers used thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a systematic method of breaking down and organizing rich data from qualitative research by tagging individual observations and quotations with appropriate codes, to facilitate the discovery of significant themes (Rosala, 2019). An additional benefit is that it is a method rather than a methodology, which is especially advantageous from the learning and teaching perspective (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In contrast to many qualitative methods, it is unconstrained by a particular theoretical perspective. It is a very adaptable strategy because it can be used for a wide range of educational tasks.

According to Caulfield (2022), thematic analysis can be done in many ways. The following are the steps followed by the researchers after gathering the responses of the participants: After the collection of the participant's responses, following the thematic analysis, the researchers transcribed the recorded responses of the SPED teachers, where they wrote each verbatim statement. Secondly, the researchers have translated the vernacular responses of the participants using English for better understanding and scholarly writing. The third step followed coding; here, the researchers labeled each participant with individual codes from R1 for response one up to R6 for response 6. After this, the researchers classified/labeled each response of the participants and the research questions to which they belonged. This helps the researchers to identify whether the participants have successfully responded to each question. Lastly, from the transcribed and labeled responses, the researchers successfully developed themes that would sum up the ideas of each participant's responses. These themes were also presented to the participants for verification and affirmation.

Trustworthiness of the Study

The researchers should possess the following responsibilities upon achieving the study: credibility, transferability, conformability, and dependability.

Credibility, the first factor, aims to gauge or assess the genuine intent. Being regarded as sincere, genuine, and honest is its main characteristic. Credibility in this study was established through member checking, peer review of the research effort, and triangulation. Diverse techniques are used during triangulation. Guba (1981) and Brewer & Hunter (1989) claim that employing many techniques makes up for individual flaws and takes advantage of associated advantages in order to ensure trust.

In this research study's findings and outcomes, transferability was employed to relate how well they can be used to explain similar phenomena, populations, or circumstances. Researchers have employed various techniques to show transferability, including giving a thorough account of the study context and participants, selecting participants purposefully to ensure diversity, and gathering rich and detailed data to discover patterns and themes. Furthermore, in order to explain how the results connect to more general ideas and phenomena, the researchers have employed theoretical frameworks. It has also participated in reflexivity to recognize and correct any biases or limits they may have. Overall, proving transferability is crucial to demonstrate the generalizability and applicability of research findings outside the confines of the specific study environment.

On the other hand, the researchers employed conformability, which explains the degree to which study findings and results accurately reflect the reality being researched without being impacted by the researcher's prejudices or assumptions, is also known as the degree of neutrality. This is crucial in research because it guarantees that the other researchers are unbiased, trustworthy, and reproducible. Researchers frequently utilize techniques like triangulation, member verification, and peer review to validate their findings and lower the possibility of bias in order to improve conformability. In the end, a research study's level of conformability or neutrality is crucial in establishing its validity and utility in advancing knowledge and guiding practice.

Lastly, the researchers added dependability, which further discusses the degree to which study methods and conclusions may be replicated by other researchers and produce reliable. This is an essential component of research since it guarantees the authenticity and credibility of the results. Researchers must be open and honest about the data they use and the procedures they follow and provide thorough documentation so that others may replicate the study. Increased sample sizes, proper statistical analysis, and standard operating processes can boost dependability. It takes careful attention to detail and open communication throughout the whole research process, from data collection to the distribution of findings, to ensure reliability.

Ethical Considerations

After determining the participants of the study, the researcher formally approached the target participants, and after that, the researchers conducted a confidential interview with the participants. The researcher also conducted a careful discussion with the chosen respondents and explained the purpose and the background of the study. The researchers asked permission to allow and record their answers during the interview to understand their given answers better. The researchers informed the participants that they would not mention their names and identities in any parts of the study to secure the participants' personal information. Lastly, the researcher extended their heartfelt gratitude to the participants who participated in the interview.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teacher's Struggles and Motivation in Teaching Twice-Exceptional Student

On the first question on unearthing teachers' struggles and motivation in teaching twice-exceptional students, participants revealed the reoccurring struggles they encounter mostly among their SPED learners. From the various struggles the teachers have met, the researchers have successfully identified four (4) major themes shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1 Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Struggles of Teachers in Teaching Twice-Exceptional Students

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Misconception about SPED Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regular teachers have negative perceptions about SPED teachers.• SPED teachers experience mistreatment and receive negative comments from other teachers.
Attending to Individual Learner's Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learners have different IQ levels.• SPED teachers face difficulty in motivating introverted learners.• Learners have varied capabilities.
Dealing with Learner's Behavior and Tantrums	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learners roam around as a sign of throwing tantrums.• Learners show negative behavior inside the classroom.• Learners carelessly attack their teacher.
Lack of Learning Facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Classroom facilities are not conducive for learners.• Principals ignore SPED teachers' concerns regarding conducive classrooms.

Misconceptions about SPED Teachers

This theme revolves around the challenges faced by special education (SPED) teachers, particularly the misconceptions held by their colleagues. These misconceptions often stem from a lack of understanding about the nature and demands of SPED teaching, leading to the erroneous belief that SPED teachers have lighter workloads and receive higher pay. This has resulted in prejudice and negative comments within the school environment, causing emotional distress for the SPED teachers.

The theme also highlights the broader societal implications of these misconceptions. The negative perceptions and mistreatment experienced by SPED teachers are not only demoralizing but also hinder the support they receive from the community. This aligns with the findings of Gaytos et al. (2020), which revealed similar experiences among SPED teachers. These encountered challenges led the SPED teachers to do it on their own.

Attending to Individual Learner's Needs

The theme emphasizes the unique challenges faced by special education (SPED) teachers in catering to the diverse needs of their students. These students, who range from those with low IQ levels to those with physical disabilities and introverted personalities, require individualized attention and strategies. The teachers' daily struggles include keeping these students on track and devising strategies for those who do not quickly master learning due to their varied capabilities.

In connection to these, Loughran (2012) expresses in parallel to these struggles that getting the learner's attention inside the classroom for participation is challenging for the regular learners, so how much more for the learners with special needs and conditions. The amount of apprehension to the SPED learners is immeasurable, so various assessment processes should be employed to integrate learning towards the learners. This claim was also found evident by Jones et al. (2017), who discuss the struggles met by the teachers where these following conditions are all subject to the development of instructional frameworks best suited to the needs of the learners.

Dealing with Learner's Behavior and Tantrums

Another struggle met by the SPED teachers was dealing with the misbehavior of the learners, who kept throwing tantrums and being uncontrollable inside the classroom. These learners are bipolar, easily triggered by their environment, cursing, and even inflicting physical harm to themselves and the people around them.

One thing that makes the life of SPED teachers challenging is the learner's behavior. Since each learner is distinct and has different needs, learners who throw tantrums inside the classroom and show uncontrollable misbehavior are very common in each participant's classroom, which causes stress to the SPED teachers in Samal Island. These collected experiences of the SPED teachers have led the researchers to develop this theme, especially when the learners start roaming around as if irritated, which often signifies an early sign of tantrums.

In parallel to these, the study conducted by Amstad and Muller (2020) showed that the most common behaviors shown by the learners are crying out loud, kicking, hitting, biting, or talking about suicide, which are all rated the most stressful among teachers. It has also been found that students with intellectual disability often exhibit high levels of problem behaviors, which include self-injury, hyperactivity, aggression, stereotypes, anxiety, or impulsivity (Kurt et al., 2014).

Attending to Individual Learner's Needs

Given that each learner in the SPED classroom needs individual attention, the teachers must attend to it. This collected experience of the teachers was found evident to all who faced challenges in their day-to-day jobs, from learners with low IQs to inattentive learners. SPED learners, given their condition, require much attention, and this attention is not limited to their physical condition alone; this also concerns their IQ level, their learning capability as a whole, and their classroom participation. Teachers need help to keep their learners on track with the following challenges.

Aside from learners with learning capability with regards to their IQ, other struggles for teachers are those learners with disability. SPED teachers also face difficulty motivating introverted learners. Additionally, the teachers have to devise strategies for the learners who cannot master learning quickly since the learners have varied capabilities.

As commonly mentioned by the participants, they are having difficulty getting their learner's attention. Because they only vied to what the learners want to do, imposing specific lessons is challenging, considering that participants express that because of the learner's IQ, they cannot force their learners. Additionally, with this type of learner's needs, teachers need help with what specific pedagogy and learning materials they will employ.

In connection to these, Loughran (2012) expresses in parallel to these struggles that getting the learner's attention inside the classroom for participation is challenging for the regular learners, so how much more for the learners with special needs and conditions. The amount of apprehension to the SPED learners is immeasurable, so various assessment processes should be employed to integrate learning towards the learners. This claim was also evident by Jones (1987), who discusses the struggles met by the teachers. Where these following conditions are met are all subject to the development of instructional frameworks that are best suited to the needs of the learners, and even if this would cost ample time to the teachers, this will be beneficial to them.

Dealing with Learner's Behavior and Tantrums

This theme highlights the significant challenges faced by special education (SPED) teachers in managing the behavior of their students. These learners are bipolar, easily triggered by their environment, cursing, and even inflicting physical harm to themselves and the people around them. Given that each learner is distinct and has different needs, some students often exhibit tantrums and uncontrollable misbehavior, posing a constant challenge in the classroom.

The behaviors range from roaming around and showing signs of irritation to sudden shifts in behavior, such as aggressiveness and even physical attacks. These behaviors, common among learners with intellectual disabilities, cause considerable stress for teachers.

The teachers' experiences revealed that these behaviors are not isolated incidents but a common theme across classrooms. The environment has also been a factor in the learners' behavior, which the teachers have observed. The collective experiences of the teachers emphasize the complexity of their role and the need for effective strategies to manage these behaviors.

In parallel to these, the study conducted by Amstad and Muller (2020) showed that the most common behaviors shown by the learners are crying out loud, kicking, hitting, biting, or talking about suicide, which are all rated the most stressful among teachers. It has also been found, according to Kurth et al. (2014), that students with intellectual disability often exhibit high levels of problem behaviors, which include self-injury, hyperactivity, aggression, stereotypes, anxiety, or impulsivity.

Lack of Learning Facility

This theme highlights the struggles of special education (SPED) teachers due to the need for more conducive learning facilities. The teachers reported that their classrooms are not friendly to their learners and lack space and essential learning aids. This problem is exacerbated by the growing population of SPED learners, which leads to overcrowded classrooms that deviate from the ideal student-teacher ratio. The teachers' concerns about these issues are often ignored, leading to significant dilemmas. This lack of adequate facilities not only affects the management of learners but also impacts the quality of learning, as certain activities cannot be performed due to space constraints.

These existing problems among SPED schools here on the Island have also shared the same problem in Metro Manila; according to Briones et al. (2016), it was found evident that SPED learners enrollees have risen by 13.04 percent from 38 671 in 2014 to 43 712 a year after (DepEd). This resulted in a problem with the proper facilities and equipment in each SPED classroom.

Additionally, Nagpayong Elementary School in Pasig City exclaimed that their school lacks resources such as hearing aids and sign language books for students. The conduciveness of each classroom has yet to be explored, as the same school teachers stated that they found difficulties accommodating 65 active learners in their class. All of these problems are also evident in the schools that the researchers have conducted.

Teachers' Motivations in Teaching Twice-Exceptional Students

Undeniably, teaching requires great passion; motivation alone is insufficient to fuel every teacher to wake up every morning and face diverse learners. Based on the data gathered according to the experiences of the participants, the

researchers have successfully identified three themes, namely: (1) passion for SPED teaching, (2) teachers' feeling of fulfillment, and (3) high salary and incentives, which all fuels each teacher's choice to wake up every day and teach these learners with special needs.

Passion for SPED Teaching

People may not understand the job of the SPED teachers, and the majority may misunderstand them, but one thing is for sure from their collective responses. They are all motivated and passionate about what they are doing.

Passion is essential for effective and high-quality teaching. Being a passionate teacher is one of the updated ways of growing knowledge, inspiring learners, and making learning exciting (Khan, 2020). Despite the challenges, they are still motivated to take care of their learners physically and emotionally. Lastly, passion for what they are doing is the cost of all their hard work as the participants have already developed emotional attachment towards their learners.

Table 2 Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Motivations of Teachers in Teaching Twice-Exceptional Students

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Passion for SPED Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers give free meals to the learners. • Teachers take care of their learners.
High Salary and Incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPED teachers are satisfied with their salaries. • SPED teachers have higher salaries than regular teachers. • SPED teachers enjoy free travel offered by the government.
Trusting God's Will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers feel destined to be SPED teachers. • Teachers accept the differences among learners. • Teachers serve the learner as a calling, not just a job.
Teacher's Feeling of Fulfillment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers are happy seeing progress in their learners. • Teachers are satisfied when learners act with initiative.

According to the common experiences of the participants shared, the reason why they keep on pursuing this profession is that they have already developed a passion for teaching learners with special needs, and because of this passion, they do not only teach the learners what is necessary but instead what is important and needed. With this, they do not confine their learners to their classroom only but rather let them experience learning in the real world and meeting real people.

A study entitled "*Passion-Based Teaching in Classroom: An Analysis using SEM-PLS Approach*" by Khan (2020) revealed that teachers did out-of-field teaching. This manner focuses on allowing their learners to acquire learning outside the classroom to create and increase harmonious passion rather than obsessive passion, as it might result in the teachers acquiring a burnout feeling. The same study suggested that teachers should make emotional attachments with the students, not criticize anyone, but encourage them to innovate and create.

High Salary and Incentives

One thing that keeps every worker going is the amount of salary they are receiving, whether it is satisfactory, excellent, or just acceptable. This is also why the workers stay at their jobs and do their best in every task. Together with this is the environment they are working in since most workers need a healthy environment to work efficiently and productively. Additionally, SPED teachers stated they had a higher salary than regular teachers. Even though handling SPED (Special Education) is difficult, our salary is enough, and we receive hazard pay.

Collectively, the participants have commonly shared that they are enjoying what they are doing, receiving enough amounts from their salary, and enjoying privileges such as travel seminars where they can explore different places free from worrying about the trip's expense and learning.

In the Philippine setting, SPED teachers receive salary bracketing in SG14 which sums amounting 33, 843 which is three tiers above the regular teacher, who only receives SG11 amounting 27, 000 according to the Philippine Public salary grade brackets (Philippine Go, 2023). The SPED teachers are also enjoying the special hardship allowance (Llego, 2022).

Trusting God's Will

This theme emphasizes fulfilling the calling and engraving the thinking that being in the profession is not by which they are appointed, perhaps because they are anointed. All the things that the participants have done are because of the will of God. Perceiving that where they are right now is because they have a mission to fulfill, and they are a SPED teacher because God anointed them to help these unique children to be educated. Teachers felt destined to be SPED teachers and teachers that accepting learner's learners is essential. They served their learner as a calling, not just a job.

The participants' collective responses have shown that they felt that they were born to be on this path. Where teaching unique learners is their everyday mission bestowed by the Almighty. They have found a reason to wake up every morning and choose to go to school and serve these learners.

An article published in Mississippi College (2017) entitled "*Answering the Call to Serve in Special Education*" described the joy and happiness they experienced in teaching the children the community treated with peculiarity. Additionally, although these teachers have experienced struggles and hardships in teaching, the mindset instilled with

them to "Teach like Jesus Taught" always prevails within them. This quoted line in the article explains that teachers (themselves) felt called to serve through teaching special education, where they follow the teaching of Jesus. This article noted, as well, that the teachers do serve as leaders as they answer the call to educate those who have learning disability.

Teachers' Feeling of Fulfillment

Moved by parents' affirmative response, learners' evident progress, and the touching lives of the learners kept the SPED teachers from their profession. Although it is undeniably challenging, the feeling of genuine fulfillment from this feedback moves them.

As the teaching profession fulfills all the elements of a profession, it is defined as the mother of all professions. True teachers do not just leave their learners hanging; instead, they ensure that learning is evident in how they give all their time and effort to provide the learners with what they need. Teachers are happy to see their learners' progress as days pass by. Additionally, when the learners show initiative and exhibit common sense like a regular child, the parents' feedback significantly affects them. Since the teachers work to touch the lives of the learners, the positive observable changes in their lives move the teachers.

From the collective response of the participants, they commonly shared that they felt fulfilled in their profession as they effectively employed learning to their learners, which resulted in the learners joining the mainstream and even receiving affirmative feedback from the parents.

Teachers develop personal fulfillment when they are passionate about their task; everything will be finer since their interest is already tied to that task. Another thing he highlighted is the students' interaction. In this manner, teachers could interact with the learners and effectively inflict learning as this is what they want to lead their learners to acquire learning, and they can often get a positive response from the parents through this (The joys of being a teacher, 2020).

SPED Teachers' Coping Mechanism with Struggles

The second question involves the coping mechanism devices practiced by the SPED teachers with regard to the struggles and challenges they met in teaching twice-exceptional learners. From the collective response of the teachers, the researchers were able to successfully come up with nine(6) major themes, which are (1) Conducting Orientation about SPED, (2) Diagnosing and Enhancing Learners Strength, (3) Repetitive Teaching, (4)Allowing Free Flow of Emotions, (5) Building Rapport with Each Learner, and (6) Maximizing learning spaces.

Conducting Orientation about SPED

Regarding the misconceptions the SPED teachers met about their profession, they devised coping mechanisms by sharing knowledge and ideas on what they genuinely do in their jobs and what is expected. The first theme was developed following the main idea of the participants, where they strategized in addressing their dilemma regarding the misconception of other teachers towards their job by inviting them to attend seminars about SPED.

The participants have commonly shared that in order for them to cope with the struggles they met in teaching twice-exceptional learners, they have to acquire new knowledge and devise ways to address their learners' needs. They expressed that sharing knowledge about their field of work has helped them overcome the misconceptions they received. Teachers should eliminate misconceptions in their classrooms and even the people around them. Educating them would be the best way to address this and create a light rapport with everyone with the best aid (Pekel & Hasenekoğlu, 2020).

Table 3 Major Themes and Core Ideas on How Teachers Cope with Their Struggles in Teaching Twice-Exceptional Student

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Conducting Orientation about SPED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers invite co-teachers to attend seminars about SPED. • Teachers initiate actions to send learners to SPED.
Diagnosing and Enhancing Learner's Strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers specialize in activities for the learners. • Teachers acknowledge the abilities of the learner to ensure learning. • Teachers create strategies to engage learners in classroom interaction.
Repetitive Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers repeat the lessons daily for the learner • Teachers develop different strategies to address learning incapability.
Allowing Free Flow of Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers talk with parents regarding the negative behavior of the learner. • Teachers let the learner calm down to control his/her emotions.
Maximizing Learning Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers manipulate available resources to cater to the needs of the learners. • Teachers take charge of the limited spaces to accommodate all the learners. • Teachers create interactive corners to address the interests of the learner.

Diagnosing and Enhancing Learner's Strength

With the evidence shown by the learners who have exhibited discrepancies in learning, SPED teachers have strategized systematic coping mechanisms to address these struggles. Participants practiced diagnosing learners' strengths, subject to

the enhancement program. The identified learners' needs became the subject of developing the enhancement activities the learners could work on. The first thing the participants did was to develop specialized activities for their learners in order for them to address each learner's strengths and weaknesses. With regards to learners' learning capability, from the participants' responses to coping with individuals' specific needs, they have come in unison in addressing the struggle by identifying learners' strengths and enhancing their capabilities.

This practice of the participants has been widely accepted and has been a result of the study conducted by Armstrong (2013), where in his study, he identified seven to bring the best in special-needs students. These include discovering students' strengths, providing positive role models with disabilities, developing strength-based learning strategies, using assistive technologies and universal design for learning tools, maximizing the power of the students' social networks, helping students envision positive future careers, and creating positive modifications in the learning environment. Similarly, several studies suggested that in order to address the learners' problems, teachers should focus on learners' strengths (Galloway et al., 2020), remind students of personal achievements (Bernacki et al., 2020; Shemshack & Spector, 2020), and utilization of technology (Espinosa et al., 2023).

Repetitive Teaching

Toward addressing the learners' low IQ level and slow level of comprehension of the lessons, the participants have shared that this was challenging for them and would always cost them so much time to devise things to address learners' needs. This major theme has been developed through the collective responses of the participants on how they come up with coping mechanisms for each learner's needs.

The collective responses of the participants, specifically on employing repeated lessons daily for the learners to master the idea, are where they have shared the things they have come up with. In employing coping mechanisms toward the learner's learning capability, unanimously, the participants exhibited repetitive teaching strategies to aid the learners' capability. The same concept was also established in the study of Benedict et al. (2013), which states that every SPED teacher should embody the repetitive concept of teaching since their learners require a more specialized approach than the regular one.

Similarly, the study of Saville et al. (2011) explored the importance of the integration of repetition learning strategy, as long as it is always accompanied by rehearsal strategies implemented inside the classroom, where this practice was found beneficial and effective in addressing learners' needs. Moreover, it shows affirmative results towards the learners' performances. It is evident in the study of Benedict et al. (2013) that every SPED teacher has embodied the repetitive concept of teaching since their learners require a more specialized approach than the regular one. Galloway et al. (2020) confirmed that in order to address the learner's problem, teachers have to focus on the learners' strengths.

Allowing Free Flow of Emotions

One of the SPED teachers' main struggles is the learners' misbehavior, the way to handle the learner's behavior, how to effectively respond to their attitude, and how they need to be treated. SPED teachers are being challenged with the learners' behavior, especially when they throw tantrums and choose not to listen to anyone around.

The participants found their way in addressing these experiences and allowed the researchers to develop such a theme, where it was observed that they let the learners cool down from their temper. They also include the learners' parents in the process.

As the participants commonly come up with strategies for addressing this problem, they must allow their learners to cool down before processing the learners. This has been their method of overcoming learners' tantrums, which they have learned from various seminars they have been with.

According to Curtis (2022), the best way to address students' behavior is to ignore the misbehavior and wait. Additionally, the teacher could show compassion and help them feel ready to discuss the issue; in this manner, the learners will be aware that their behavior is inappropriate. To address misbehavior is to educate learners on things that are appropriate and what are not and constantly deliver rules to the learners for them to be aware of the behavior they should display inside the classroom (Zoder-Martell et al., 2023; Wangdi & Namgyel, 2022; Ali & Gracey, 2013).

Maximizing Learning Spaces

In congruence with the lack of need for more learning facilities in the SPED centers, there has been evidence that there is a problem with the size of the learning classrooms among schools that the researchers have been with. Given that the problem already exists and the support to address these needs is evident, the participants must strategize alternatives to address this.

In this regard, they have also commonly employed the same strategy, where they manipulate the available resources to cater to the needs of the learners. Additionally, the participants have to be creative in creating interactive corners to address the interests of the learner.

In connection to the lack of a learning facility conducive to learners' learning environment, participants have found a way in the limited classroom to increase the number of learners under their supervision. A participant shared that instead of waiting for the long construction of a new classroom, they divided the regular classroom into four, which are enough for the learners they only have.

On the other hand, other participants shared that instead of always staying inside the classroom to learn, they carried the learning out and conducted their classes in their playground, garden, and even the school field. The number of students must be parallel to the classroom size; with this, the teachers may be able to address each learner's need and may be able to watch over everyone (LeBlanc, 2022; Antalan et al., 2018).

Additionally, if learners become distracted by the chaos that can occur in the room, these students must be served in a self-contained classroom. However, according to DepEd, the availability of self-contained classrooms is limited in the Philippines, which the secretary of education has determined. Although in Sections 7 and 8 on the House Bill No. 1422 by Pangasinan 5th Dist. Representative Hon. Ramon N. Guico Jr. (2022) stated that SPED learning areas must be conducive, least restrictive, and have the freedom to play with other kids. It has also been further introduced in the bill that there must be an acquisition of equipment, construction, and alteration of the facilities. However, since the schools in Samal Island are still far from this development, the idea employed by the participants was to divide the existing classrooms to aid the need.

Insights Gleaned from SPED Teacher's Experiences

After a series of deliberations and brainstorming on the participant's responses, the researchers successfully came up with a constructive understanding of the experiences of the twice-exceptional teachers. The researchers considered three main points: (1) Struggles of SPED Teachers, (2) Motivation of SPED Teachers, and (3) SPED Teachers' Coping Mechanisms toward their Struggles. With this, the researchers have developed 3 major themes, namely: (1) Managing twice-exceptional learners' behavior is completely challenging, (2) SPED teachers are motivated both intrinsically and extrinsically, and (3) SPED teachers exert efforts to address the demands and needs of the learners.

Managing Twice-Exceptional Learners' Behavior is Completely Challenging

Being a teacher is already challenging enough, as is the demand for work, the costly time to prepare the lessons and materials, and dealing with the diverse behavior of the learners is another struggle to deal with. With the thorough analysis and brainstorming of the researchers, it has been concluded that this major theme has been developed. It has been evident from the participants' responses that managing SPED learners is very challenging; since each learner has different needs, they have to mobilize their instructions and extract ideas on how to manage them well inside the classroom; learners' behavior is unpredictable. One participant even experienced being the victim of the learner's misbehavior inside the classroom.

Consequently, Evans (2011) expressed that getting the learner's attention inside the classroom for participation is challenging for learners with special needs and conditions. In support of this, Amstad and Muller (2020) found that the most common behaviors shown by the learners are crying out loud, kicking, hitting, biting, or talking about suicide, which are all rated the most stressful among teachers. It has also been found, according to Kurth et al. (2014), that students with intellectual disability often exhibit high levels of problem behaviors, which include self-injury, hyperactivity, aggression, stereotypes, anxiety, or impulsivity.

SPED Teachers are Motivated both Intrinsically and Extrinsically

The participants have also seen the light behind the struggles they face in teaching SPED learners. Although, it is undeniable that SPED learners are hard to tame, especially when they start to throw tantrums. As stated by one of the participants deep, despite her struggles in this profession, she is still grateful for being where she is, as she considers her profession a way of serving God. Such a noble profession indeed, teachers' jobs are more challenging than the others perceive.

Another participant even added from her profession that she had already learned to love her profession because of the children. She added that it is heartwarming to love children who are considered peculiar by others, as these children give love that would melt your heart. Considering these experiences, the high salary and incentives added to the extrinsic motivation of the SPED teachers as they are receiving more than the regular teachers do. With the amount they were receiving, they could provide gifts to their learners without thinking that much.

This has caused them to feel fulfilled; the evident growth of the learners, the high salary teachers received, and the free and funded travel seminars are most of the motivations that keep the teachers going in their profession. These incentives, which the teachers are always looking forward to when the end of the school year is approaching, also keep them motivated. These seem like the icing on their challenging cupcake.

Intrinsically, teachers are motivated by the positive feedback they receive from parents of their learners and by observing growth in the learners' learning acquisition. This results in them being passionate about what they are doing. The study conducted by Yasmeeen et al. (2019) revealed that special education teachers' intrinsic motivation is enjoyment, honor, interest, and achievement.

On the other hand, the extrinsic motivation in the same study reveals comparatively low chances of promotion, low salaries, limited facilities, and no job security. Luckily, in the Philippines, several studies contradict this claim, specifically the salary of the SPED teachers since the teachers in the Philippines received a much higher salary than the regular teacher 1 in the DepEd.

SPED Teacher's Efforts to Address Demands and Learners' Need

Indeed, being with learners with special needs is not just all about drowning with their cuteness and sweetness, but rather, you also have to deal with their clothed anger the moment they erupt when triggered. However, mediocre teachers only

teach what is in the lesson's context and often need to pay more attention to learners' outcomes. On this note, the collective response of the participants shows that they are all extra milers, in the sense that most of them have shown that they did exert extra effort in teaching their learners. They teach more than what is required and are heroes in this field.

This observation was supported by the experiences of the two participants when their learners threw tantrums. They added that learners' behavior in throwing tantrums is inevitable, and the teacher could only wait for them to get calm. This is not the only thing that the SPED teachers would cost their patience, given that they are special; SPED learners often have low IQ levels, and teaching them lessons would cost the teachers a lot. This was evident in the experience shared by another participant, where whenever the learners need help comprehending the given idea, the teachers have no choice but to employ repetitive teaching methods. The SPED teachers and participants of this study have widely used this method.

Based on the theories anchored in this study, it is evident that Hornby's Inclusive Special Education (2014) was well-observed by the participants, who utilized more efficient methods in delivering quality education to the learners, which is what this theory is all about. This common coping mechanism of the participants led the researchers to develop a theme.

Additionally, Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs (1943) correlates with the study's participants and how they managed to acquire learners' trust, especially when the learners felt unease inside the learning areas, where there are countless unknowns, along with the learners' sense of safety, developing their esteem by enhancing learners' strengths on the skills they are good at, and a sense of belongingness by developing activities that would enhance the learners' camaraderie.

Finally, Watson's behaviorism theory (1913) found a broad scope in the study. Given the situation, the participants' learners have further observed that the learners' misbehavior has cost the participants too much and has given them a lot of hard times. As this theory entails behavioral modifications brought on by the learners' associations of stimulus-response, researchers found out, based on the participant's responses, that the driving force of the learners' proactive stimulus is due to the environment they are in, especially since they are unfamiliar with the place where they are in and the people that surround them.

Furthermore, the presence of these theories in this study has been a valuable aid to the researchers in developing and identifying a systematic understanding of the process undertaken. It has also been a great tool in analyzing the entire process to make progress in this study.

Overall, the data collected from the common experiences of the participants may vary if applied to different areas. Due to the criteria set for determining the study's participants and the locality they belonged, their response may be different from the experiences of other SPED teachers and may not be applicable to their perspective. Although vying for other SPED teachers' trust, depending on the result of this study, bears significance; the researchers still suggest seeking a more constructive strategy that is effective to their perspective. Lastly, despite the study's limitation, the researchers still successfully identified the struggles and coping mechanisms met and experienced by the SPED teachers in Island Garden City of Samal.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Implications for Teaching Twice-Exceptional Learners

Evidently, several implications are drawn from the data gathered in the participants' responses. It has been confirmed that misconceptions from the regular teachers towards the SPED teachers are occurring, which has led them to be belittled in their profession. This implication has also given the teachers doubt and dragged their esteem to the bottom low. However, the manifestation of orientation and seminars with regards to educating their colleagues and community, spitting facts on what truly is the task of the SPED teachers, have resulted in being widely accepted in their vicinity and scope of work. This response to this struggle has significantly resulted in the SPED teachers continuing their profession.

Given that twice-exceptional learners, it is critical for them to understand that some of their peers may be twice exceptional, which means they have both outstanding abilities and limitations. All learners can benefit from a more inclusive and encouraging learning environment by being aware of and respecting these distinctions. It is crucial to speak up for your requirements and make them known to your professors and peers if you consider yourself to be a twice-exceptional learner. By doing this, you can get the assistance and modifications you need to excel in school and your personal life. It is essential to remember that having remarkable talents or disabilities is not a drawback but a distinguishing quality that can provide diversity and worthwhile contributions to the classroom and society.

In order to achieve this, teachers must fulfill the specific learning demands of these pupils, and teachers of twice-exceptional learners must adopt a flexible and personalized approach. In order to help people realize their full potential, this may entail recognizing and addressing their strengths and weaknesses and offering specialized support and accommodations. Teachers may also need to be knowledgeable about various approaches and tools, including assistive technology, specialized courses, and educational interventions that can help the learning and growth of twice-exceptional students. Additionally, to make sure that kids receive thorough and coordinated support that meets their varied needs, teachers must work in conjunction with other specialists such as occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, and mental health professionals. Teachers may support twice-exceptional learners in thriving academically, socially, and emotionally by taking a proactive and collaborative approach. They can also provide a welcoming and encouraging learning environment for all students.

On the other hand, the researchers further suggest that teaching students who are twice as exceptional can have a significant impact on schools. Schools must first and foremost acknowledge the special requirements of students who are twice exceptional and offer the necessary adjustments and assistance. This can entail having access to specialized services like occupational or speech therapy, as well as personalized teaching at a flexible pace. Teachers may also need to modify their teaching strategies, such as employing visual aids or including hands-on activities, to fit the various learning preferences and academic strengths of twice-exceptional children. The significance of early diagnosis and intervention is another implication of teaching twice-exceptional learners. In order to provide twice-exceptional individuals the help they require to achieve, schools must try to discover and diagnose them as soon as feasible. This may entail carrying out tests and examinations to spot learning impairments as well as spotting ability and giftedness.

Concluding Remarks

Teaching diverse learners is already challenging enough. How much more in teaching learners with special needs, the impact of regular teachers' misconceptions on SPED teachers cannot be overstated. Misconceptions can lead to a lack of understanding and empathy, which can ultimately result in inadequate support for students with special needs. SPED teachers must work hard to dispel these misconceptions and educate their colleagues on the unique challenges and needs of their students. By fostering a culture of collaboration and understanding, regular and SPED teachers can work together to provide the best possible education for all students.

With this, schools and education systems need to invest in ongoing professional development opportunities for both regular and SPED teachers. This can include training on effective collaboration strategies, communication techniques, and specific strategies for supporting students with different types of disabilities. By investing in teacher training, schools can improve the quality of education provided to students with special needs, reduce teacher burnout, and create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students. In the end, improving the education and support provided to students with special needs is a collective responsibility that requires the active participation and collaboration of all teachers, school administrators, and education stakeholders.

Despite the challenges, being a SPED teacher can also be incredibly rewarding. Helping learners overcome their behavioral difficulties and watching them grow and succeed academically and socially can be an incredibly fulfilling experience. By working closely with families, caregivers, and other professionals, SPED teachers can make a significant difference in the lives of their learners and their families. Ultimately, the work of SPED teachers is vital to ensuring that all learners have access to quality education and the support they need to thrive.

Being a Special Education (SPED) teacher can be a challenging profession, especially when dealing with learners' behavior and tantrums. These situations require patience, understanding, and specialized skills that go beyond traditional teaching methods. SPED teachers should deeply understand their students' needs and be prepared to use various strategies to help them manage their behavior.

Educators must have a thorough understanding of the special requirements, abilities, and impairments of twice-exceptional students in order to teach them successfully. Observing these students' development can, however, also be incredibly rewarding. Teachers of twice-exceptional students must have a thorough awareness of both their strengths and shortcomings and employ tailored tactics that take into account each student's particular learning preferences if they are to be successful. Teachers should inspire and equip these students to fulfill their potential while teaching them functional coping skills to deal with difficulties. Teachers may help twice-exceptional students succeed academically and personally by fostering a supportive and welcoming learning environment. This will pave the road for their future success.

Lastly, twice exceptional teaching students (2e) is a challenging endeavor that needs additional consideration and care. In order to combat the preconceptions that regular teachers have about their position, the behavior of the students, and the lack of facilities, special education (SPED) teachers have successfully created coping mechanisms. These tactics entail creating open lines of communication, fostering mutual respect and understanding, and working together with all parties involved. Teaching 2e learners can benefit from the application of the principle of triangulation, which emphasizes the use of numerous sources of data to acquire a thorough picture of a situation. This will improve instructional design, support, and evaluation. SPED teachers can more effectively identify the learners' strengths, challenges, and needs and personalize their instruction and interventions by triangulating data from several sources, including the learner, teachers, and parents.

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