The Impact of Inadequate Working Conditions and Professional Development on Self-Efficacy in Inclusive Regular Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how working conditions and professional development impact the self-efficacy of SPED teachers in inclusive classrooms. The main research question examines how these factors influence teachers' confidence and effectiveness in managing diverse classroom settings. By employing a case study methodology, the study delves deeply into the experiences of SPED teachers, providing a rich and comprehensive understanding of the subject. The qualitative component utilized a case study approach, involving semi-structured interviews, focus groups, classroom observations, and document analysis. Participants were SPED teachers from various public schools in Santo Tomas, Davao Region, Philippines. The data were analyzed thematically to identify key patterns and themes related to self-efficacy. Additionally, surveys were administered to collect quantitative data on teachers' working conditions, professional development experiences, and self-efficacy levels. These survey results were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to uncover trends and correlations. Findings revealed that teachers in well-resourced schools with ample professional development opportunities reported higher levels of self-efficacy. These teachers felt confident and capable of effectively implementing inclusive practices. In contrast, teachers in schools with limited resources and sporadic professional development experienced lower self-efficacy, feeling overwhelmed and inadequately prepared for inclusive education. The thematic analysis identified four main factors influencing self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological states. Teachers' confidence was significantly boosted by successful teaching experiences and observing peers' successes. Positive feedback and encouragement from colleagues and supervisors further reinforced self-belief. Conversely, high levels of stress and poor emotional well-being negatively impacted self-efficacy. In conclusion, the study highlights the necessity of improving working conditions and providing comprehensive professional development to enhance the self-efficacy of SPED teachers in inclusive classrooms. These improvements are vital for achieving better educational outcomes, increasing teacher job satisfaction, and creating a more supportive and effective learning environment. The study's findings offer valuable insights for policymakers, school administrators, and educators striving to support inclusive education.

Keywords: Self-Efficacy, SPED Teachers, Inclusive Education, Teacher Confidence, Educational Resources, Stress Management

INTRODUCTION

Working conditions refer to the environment in which teachers operate, including factors such as workload, salary, and school infrastructure. Professional development encompasses ongoing training and education to enhance teachers' skills and knowledge. These factors affect teachers' self-efficacy in inclusive regular classrooms, leading to low confidence in their ability to support diverse student needs. Inclusive classrooms pose significant challenges for teachers, including managing diverse student behaviors, adapting curriculum to meet various learning needs, and accessing adequate resources (Moinolnolki & Han, 2017). Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) presents particular challenges, such as difficulties in communication and social interactions, which require specialized support that many teachers feel unprepared to provide (Gray, 2015; Nealy et al., 2015). Research indicates that teachers globally face considerable challenges in inclusive classrooms due to insufficient training and inadequate resources. In the United States, teachers report low self-efficacy due to lack of support and training for inclusive education (Swackhamer et al., 2015). Similarly, in the UK, inadequate

professional development and high workload contribute to teachers' struggles in implementing inclusive practices effectively (Florian & Linklater, 2016).

In the Philippines, teachers in inclusive classrooms face significant challenges such as lack of training and insufficient resources, leading to low self-efficacy (David, 2020). Many educators report struggling with implementing inclusive education due to inadequate professional development opportunities (Mendoza & Bandalaria, 2018).

Understanding the specific factors that affect teachers' self-efficacy in inclusive classrooms in the Sta. Ana Elementary School an area with significant gaps. If these issues are not adequately addressed, the quality of education for students with diverse needs may continue to deteriorate, further exacerbating educational disparities (Ramos, 2021). It is urgent to address this gap and develop effective strategies for improving teachers' self-efficacy, ensuring that all students receive the necessary support to succeed (Luna, 2020).

Research Questions
This study aims to answer the following specific questions regarding the impact of inadequate working conditions and professional development on teachers' self-efficacy in inclusive regular classrooms:

1. How do inadequate working conditions affect teachers' self-efficacy in inclusive regular classrooms?
2. What are the specific challenges faced by teachers in inclusive regular classrooms due to insufficient professional development?
3. How do teachers perceive the support provided by their schools in addressing the diverse needs of students in inclusive classrooms?

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this study is to investigate how inadequate working conditions and professional development impact teachers' self-efficacy in inclusive regular classrooms. This research is crucial for several key stakeholders: educators, policymakers, and students. For educators, the study provides insights into the specific challenges they face, highlighting areas where support and resources are most needed. By understanding these factors, educators can advocate for better working conditions and professional development opportunities, leading to increased self-efficacy and job satisfaction. Policymakers can use the findings to inform decisions on teacher training, resource allocation, and support systems. Effective policies addressing these issues can enhance teachers' confidence and competence, ensuring they are well-equipped to meet diverse student needs. This, in turn, fosters a more inclusive and supportive educational environment.

For students, particularly those with diverse learning needs, the impact is profound. Teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to employ inclusive teaching strategies and provide individualized support, leading to improved academic outcomes and better social integration. Ensuring teachers are adequately supported benefits students by promoting equity and inclusion in the classroom. Overall, this study aims to enhance understanding of how working conditions and professional development affect teachers' self-efficacy, with practical implications for improving teacher support and educational outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing research on working conditions, professional development, and teacher self-efficacy in inclusive settings reveals significant insights. Inclusive classrooms can be a source of stress for special education teachers (SETs) due to increased collaboration and reduced autonomy, often leading to burnout characterized by emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Squillaci & Hofmann, 2021). Despite these challenges, perceived health at work does not significantly differ between SETs in inclusive and non-inclusive settings (Squillaci & Hofmann, 2021).

Professional development (PD) has been shown to positively impact teacher self-efficacy, with effective PD programs enhancing teachers' beliefs in their ability to manage classroom challenges and improve student outcomes (Bray-Clark & Bates, 2016). Teachers who value PD tend to engage more deeply in these activities and exhibit higher self-efficacy (Rutherford et al., 2017). Teacher self-efficacy is crucial for effective teaching and student achievement, with high levels of self-efficacy associated with greater job satisfaction, lower stress levels, and better classroom management (Caprara et al., 2003). In inclusive settings, teachers' personal values and motivations play a significant role in their self-efficacy (Barni et al., 2019). In summary, while inclusive classrooms present unique challenges, effective professional development can enhance teacher self-efficacy, leading to better teaching practices and student outcomes.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory posits that self-efficacy, or one's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations, plays a critical role in how people think, behave, and feel (Bandura, 1997). According to Bandura (1986), self-efficacy is influenced by four main sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological states. Mastery experiences involve personal success in specific tasks, which enhance confidence and belief in one's abilities. Vicarious experiences occur through observing others succeed, which can boost one's own self-efficacy by seeing someone else achieve success in similar tasks. Social persuasion includes positive encouragement and feedback from others, which can strengthen self-belief and motivation. Lastly, physiological states refer to the physical and emotional conditions that affect one's self-efficacy, such as stress or fatigue, which can undermine confidence, whereas positive emotions can enhance it. In the context of teaching, self-efficacy can significantly impact educators' willingness to implement inclusive practices and their persistence in overcoming challenges (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). Teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to adopt innovative instructional strategies, effectively manage diverse classrooms, and remain resilient in the face of difficulties. This is particularly crucial in inclusive education settings, where teachers must address varied learning needs and create supportive environments for all students. Therefore, understanding and enhancing teachers' self-efficacy through improved working conditions and professional development is vital for the successful implementation of inclusive education. Teachers' belief in their capabilities can lead to better educational outcomes, greater job satisfaction, and a positive learning atmosphere, ultimately benefiting both educators and students.
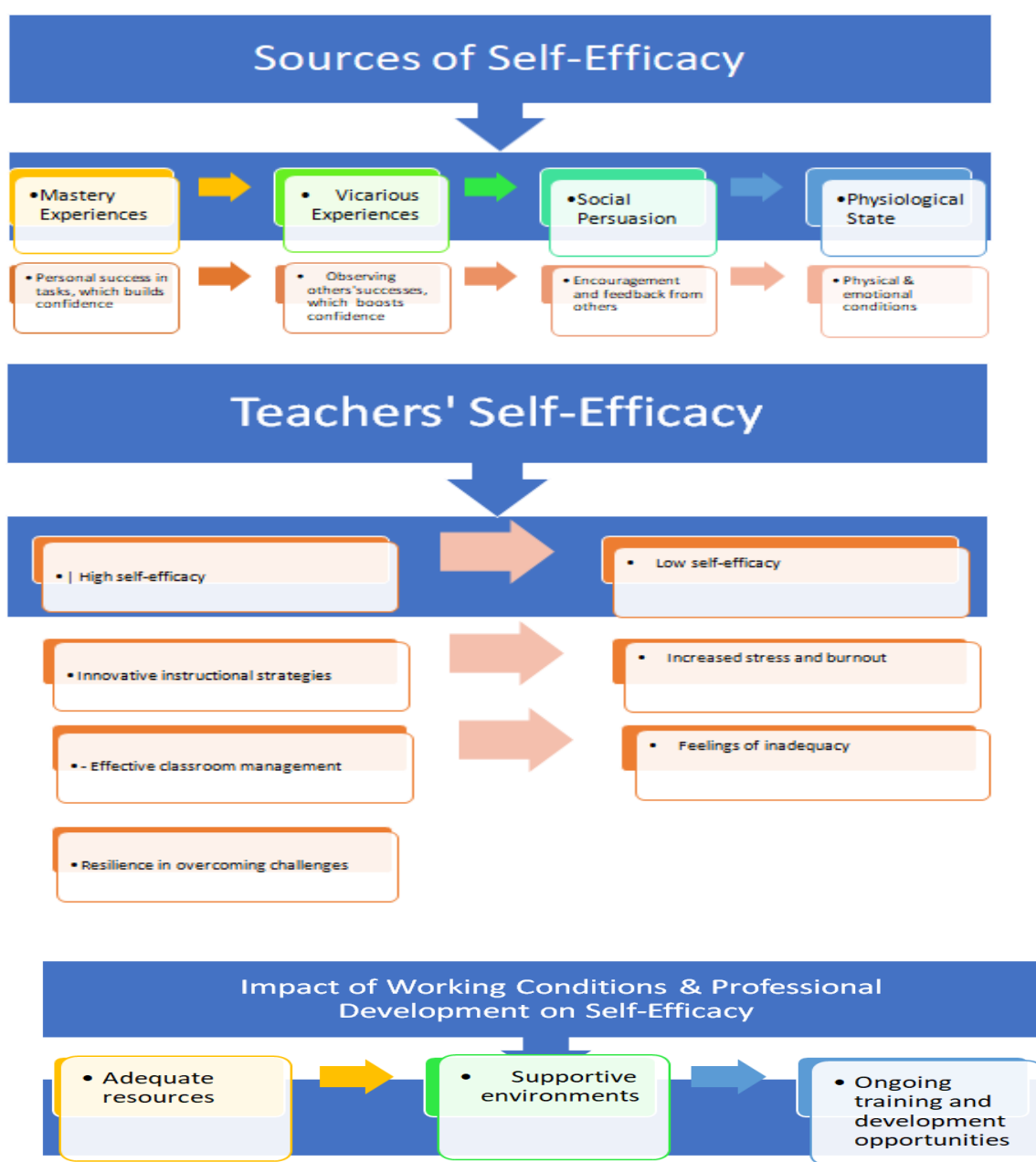
METHODOLOGY

This section describes the methodology used in the qualitative study, including the case study method. It presents a detailed overview of the research design, study location, research participants, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques.

Research Design

We'll employ a qualitative case study approach to deeply investigate how working conditions and professional development impact teachers' self-efficacy in inclusive classrooms. The primary objective is to delve into the lived experiences of SPED teachers, examining how their work environment and training shape their confidence and effectiveness in these settings.

This method will provide a rich, nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities these educators face, highlighting the critical factors that influence their ability to support diverse learners effectively..

Case Selection

This research was carried out in various schools located in the city of Santo Tomas, within the Davao Region of the Philippines. The study spanned multiple public schools, offering a representative snapshot of SPED teachers working in different educational contexts. To capture a wide array of experiences, we selected schools with varying levels of resources and professional development programs. It was crucial to include teachers with different levels of experience who are actively teaching in inclusive classrooms to fully understand how these factors impact their self-efficacy. We used purposeful sampling to ensure a diverse mix of schools and educators, providing richer and more nuanced insights into what influences teacher confidence and effectiveness in inclusive setting

Data Collection Methods

To gather comprehensive data for this study, we'll employ a combination of semi-structured interviews, focus groups, classroom observations, and document analysis. We'll conduct one-on-one semi-structured interviews with each participant to gain detailed, personal insights into their experiences, challenges, and perceptions. These interviews will utilize open-ended questions to encourage in-depth responses.

Additionally, we'll organize focus groups to facilitate the sharing of ideas, collaborative problem-solving, and the identification of common themes among subsets of participants. To understand how inclusive practices are implemented and how diverse student needs are managed, we'll observe classroom interactions and teaching methods, paying particular attention to teacher-student interactions and the use of inclusive strategies and resources. Finally, we'll review relevant school documents, such as professional development records, policies, and classroom materials, to provide additional context and evidence for our study. This multi-method approach will ensure a rich and nuanced understanding of the factors influencing teachers' self-efficacy in inclusive classrooms.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process involves several critical stages. First, **familiarization** requires transcribing interviews and focus group discussions, as well as reviewing observation notes to deeply understand the data. Next, **coding** involves developing initial codes to categorize the data into meaningful groups. This step includes open coding, which identifies initial ideas and concepts; axial coding, which organizes these codes into categories to understand their relationships; and selective coding, which pinpoints core themes representing the main findings. Following this, in the **theme development** stage, these codes are grouped into potential themes and reviewed to ensure they accurately reflect the data. Then, in the **defining and naming themes** stage, each theme's details are refined, and clear definitions and names are generated. Finally, the **narrative compilation** stage synthesizes these themes into a coherent narrative that addresses the research questions and provides comprehensive insights into the factors influencing teachers' self-efficacy in inclusive classrooms.

Ethical Considerations

Before initiating the study, it is crucial to obtain informed consent from all participants. This means clearly explaining the study's purpose and their rights in an accessible manner to ensure full understanding. Written consent must be collected to formalize their participation. Additionally, safeguarding confidentiality is paramount. This involves protecting participants' identities and any sensitive information they share throughout the research process. Lastly, reflexivity is essential for maintaining research integrity. This requires the researcher to continuously reflect on their own biases and consider how these might impact the study's findings. By being aware of and addressing these biases, the researcher can strive for objectivity and accuracy in the study.

RESULT

Narrative Description

Table 1 Descriptions of each case, highlighting unique aspects of the experiences of SPED teachers in inclusive classrooms

Case	Teacher Description	Unique Aspects
1	Teacher A works in a well-resourced school with ample professional development opportunities.	High self-efficacy due to a supportive environment, regular collaboration with colleagues, and positive feedback from supervisors.
2	Teacher B teaches in a school with limited resources and sporadic professional development.	Developed creative strategies to manage diverse student needs, but faces stress and feelings of inadequacy due to lack of consistent support.
3	Teacher C's school offers moderate resources and occasional professional development workshops.	Benefits from peer support and shared experiences, enhancing self-efficacy through observing successful inclusive practices in other classrooms.
4	Teacher D faces significant challenges due to insufficient resources and minimal professional development.	Often feels overwhelmed and struggles with maintaining self-efficacy but remains passionate about inclusive education and seeks informal support networks.
5	Teacher E is in a school with excellent resources and comprehensive professional development programs.	Reports high job satisfaction and strong self-efficacy, supported by consistent encouragement from peers and supervisors.

Cross-Case Analysis

Table 2. Highlights the common themes such as resource levels, professional development, support systems, self-efficacy, challenges faced, and innovative practices

Themes	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D	Teacher E
Resource Levels	Well-resourced	Limited resources	Moderate resources	Insufficient resources	Excellent resources
Professional Development	Ample opportunities	Sporadic opportunities	Occasional workshops	Minimal opportunities	Comprehensive programs
Support Systems	Supportive environment, regular collaboration, positive feedback	Limited support, creative strategies used	Peer support, shared experiences	Informal support networks	Consistent encouragement from peers and supervisors
Self-Efficacy	High	Moderate but fluctuating	Strengthened by vicarious experiences	Often low, but passionate	High, with strong job satisfaction
Challenges Faced	Few, well-supported	Stress and feelings of inadequacy due to inconsistent support	Managing diverse needs with peer support	Overwhelmed by demands, struggles with maintaining self-efficacy	Few, well-supported
Innovative Practices	Regularly implements effective inclusive strategies	Developed creative strategies	Benefits from observing successful practices	Passionate but struggles with implementation	Implements effective strategies consistently

This study uncovered several key insights about the impact of working conditions and professional development on the self-efficacy of SPED teachers in inclusive classrooms. Teachers like Teacher A and Teacher E, who worked in well-resourced schools with ample professional development opportunities, reported high levels of self-efficacy. They expressed

confidence in their ability to manage diverse classrooms and implement inclusive practices effectively. In contrast, teachers such as Teacher B and Teacher D, working in environments with limited resources and minimal professional development, experienced lower self-efficacy. These teachers often felt overwhelmed and inadequately prepared to address the challenges of inclusive education.

The thematic analysis identified four main themes influencing self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological states. **Mastery experiences**, such as personal success in implementing inclusive practices, emerged as the most potent source of self-efficacy. Teachers with successful teaching experiences felt more confident and capable. **Vicarious experiences**, or observing successful practices in other classrooms, also had a positive impact on self-efficacy. **Social persuasion**, which includes positive feedback and encouragement from peers and supervisors, significantly boosted teachers' self-belief. Lastly, **physiological states**, such as stress and emotional well-being, were crucial, with high levels of stress correlating with lower self-efficacy.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings align with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes the importance of self-efficacy in shaping individuals' thoughts, behaviors, and emotions (Bandura, 1997). The role of mastery experiences, identified as the most influential factor, underscores the necessity of providing teachers with opportunities for success in their roles. This can be facilitated through ongoing professional development and sufficient resources that enable teachers to effectively implement inclusive practices.

Moreover, vicarious experiences highlight the importance of collaborative learning environments where teachers can observe and learn from one another. Professional development programs that incorporate peer observations and collaborative workshops can enhance self-efficacy by demonstrating successful strategies in action. Social persuasion emphasizes the need for supportive school cultures where teachers receive regular positive feedback and encouragement. School leaders are pivotal in fostering these supportive environments, significantly boosting teachers' confidence and motivation.

Furthermore, physiological states, such as stress and emotional well-being, stress the need to address teachers' mental health and well-being. Schools should provide resources and support systems to help teachers manage stress and maintain a positive emotional state, which, in turn, can enhance their self-efficacy.

In conclusion, improving working conditions and providing comprehensive professional development are crucial for enhancing SPED teachers' self-efficacy in inclusive classrooms. These enhancements can lead to better educational outcomes for students, increased job satisfaction for teachers, and a more positive learning environment overall.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study highlights the significant impact that working conditions and professional development have on the self-efficacy of SPED teachers in inclusive classrooms. Teachers who work in well-resourced schools with ample professional development opportunities, like Teacher A and Teacher E, report higher levels of self-efficacy and confidence in their ability to manage diverse classrooms and implement inclusive practices effectively. Conversely, those working in environments with limited resources and minimal professional development, such as Teacher B and Teacher D, experience lower self-efficacy, feeling overwhelmed and inadequately prepared to address the challenges of inclusive education. The findings underscore the importance of mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological states in influencing self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Successful teaching experiences (mastery) and observing successful practices (vicarious) significantly enhance teachers' confidence. Supportive feedback (social persuasion) further boosts self-efficacy, while stress and poor emotional well-being (physiological states) undermine it.

Based on these findings, several recommendations emerge for enhancing the self-efficacy of SPED teachers in inclusive settings. First, schools should prioritize the provision of adequate resources and ongoing professional development tailored to the needs of teachers in inclusive classrooms. Professional development programs should include opportunities for teachers to observe and learn from successful inclusive practices, promoting vicarious experiences that build confidence.

Additionally, fostering a supportive school culture where teachers receive regular positive feedback and encouragement is crucial for social persuasion. Addressing the physiological states of teachers is also essential; schools should implement support systems that help teachers manage stress and maintain a positive emotional state. This could include mental health

resources, stress management workshops, and peer support groups. These measures can create a more supportive and effective teaching environment, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes for students, greater job satisfaction for teachers, and a more positive learning atmosphere overall (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). By enhancing the working conditions and professional development opportunities for SPED teachers, schools can significantly improve the self-efficacy and effectiveness of educators in inclusive classrooms.

Implications

Improving working conditions and professional development is crucial for enhancing teachers' self-efficacy, especially in inclusive classroom settings. The practical implications of this are multifaceted and significant for both educators and students.

To begin with, providing adequate resources and support is fundamental. Schools must ensure that teachers have access to sufficient teaching materials, technological tools, and classroom aids that facilitate inclusive education. This includes not only physical resources but also access to specialized personnel, such as teaching assistants and counselors, who can provide additional support for diverse learning needs. Consequently, a well-resourced environment enables teachers to feel prepared and capable, thereby boosting their self-efficacy.

Moreover, professional development should be continuous and tailored to the specific needs of teachers working in inclusive settings. Workshops and training sessions should focus on inclusive teaching strategies, classroom management, and differentiated instruction.

Additionally, professional development programs should incorporate opportunities for teachers to observe and learn from successful peers. This can be achieved through peer observations, mentoring programs, and collaborative workshops. By regularly updating their skills and knowledge, teachers can build confidence in their ability to implement effective inclusive practices.

Creating a supportive and collaborative school culture is also essential. School leaders should foster an environment where teachers feel valued and encouraged. Regular positive feedback, recognition of achievements, and opportunities for teachers to share their successes and challenges with colleagues can significantly enhance self-efficacy. Furthermore, peer support groups and team-building activities can promote a sense of community and mutual support among teachers.

Finally, schools must prioritize the mental health and well-being of teachers. Providing resources such as stress management workshops, access to mental health professionals, and implementing policies that promote work-life balance can help teachers manage stress and maintain a positive emotional state. By addressing these physiological factors, schools can support teachers in sustaining high levels of self-efficacy.

Overall, by implementing these practical measures, schools can create an environment where teachers feel confident, supported, and equipped to meet the diverse needs of their students, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes.

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