SELF-EFFICACY AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS AS PREDICTORS OF BEHAVIORAL STRATEGIES IN HANDLING LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES IN AN INCLUSIVE SETTING

Andri Mae E. Ypil[1]*, Mary Lyn D. Bajao[2], Marites S. Ordonio[3], Justine Gale D. Lloren[4], Darlen Mae A. Sarsalijo[5]

[1-5]Holy Cross of Davao College, Philippines

Corresponding Author's Email: ameypil@addu.edu.ph

ABSTRACT

Teachers' ineffective behavioral strategies remain a persistent challenge in educational settings. This study investigated the predictive roles of self-efficacy and support systems in shaping the behavioral strategies of teachers. Utilizing a purposive sampling technique, data were collected from 100 general education teachers in a private school in the Philippines. The findings revealed that both self-efficacy and support systems are significant predictors of behavioral strategies, affirming the core premise of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory—the reciprocal interaction among behavior, personal factors, and environmental influences. The study underscores the need for further exploration through multiple linear regression analyses incorporating additional predictors to account for the remaining variance in behavioral strategies. Moreover, qualitative research focusing on the lived experiences of teachers and learners with disabilities in inclusive education contexts is recommended to deepen understanding and enhance intervention efforts.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the education sector in the Philippines has undergone a significant transformation marked by changes in policies, regulations, and assessment methods. One pivotal change that has garnered attention is the implementation of Department Order No. 007, series of 2023, which introduced a new criterion and point system for hiring Teacher 1 positions. This policy shift is poised to have far-reaching implications for both aspiring educators and the educational landscape in the country. The primary goal is to enhance the selection process for teaching positions by introducing a more comprehensive and objective evaluation system.

Poor behavioral strategies are widely reported among general education teachers working in schools with curricula that do not have adaptations for learners with disabilities (Jafree et al., 2022). Consequently, these

educators often struggle to proactively address challenging behaviors and implement effective interventions when they arise (Jackson & Parker, 2023). In the United States, for example, many schools hired general education teachers due to the ongoing shortage of special education professionals (Ingersoll & Tran, 2023). Most general education teachers demonstrate poor behavioral strategies in handling diverse learners in inclusive settings. A study by Alkahtani (2022) further emphasized that general education teachers often lack the necessary knowledge and attitudes to effectively support students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD).

In the Philippines, the same problem persists. Poor behavioral strategies among teachers remain a major challenge in the education system (Macatangay, 2023). According to Gonzaga et al. (2023), despite the efforts to implement inclusive education policies, many general education teachers in special education centers poorly performed behavioral strategies, including limited resources like specialist roles and facilities. In a phenomenological study of Cagape and Bauyot (2024) with special education teachers in the Panabo City Division, they mentioned that even specialized teachers encounter overwhelming experiences in responding to the needs of learners with disabilities, how much more those who lack knowledge and training.

These poor behavioral strategies may result in frequent scolding, removing learners from the classroom, or inconsistent enforcement of rules (Diliberti & Schwartz, 2023). If this happens over time, these strategies may lead to learners with disabilities feeling unaccepted, misunderstood, or excluded from learning. It can also increase teacher frustration, classroom disruptions, and long-term student disengagement, which undermine their capacity to implement effective behavior strategies that are responsive and inclusive in education (Beltran, et al., 2024). These effects on learners with disabilities and teacher performance significantly trigger the urgency of this study. In addition, urgency is increased by the lack of research on poor behavioral strategies of general education teachers. This is the reason why this study is being pursued and conducted. This study is significant as it explored how teachers' beliefs influence teachers' behavioral strategies in their abilities and the support they receive from peers and school leaders.

Problem Statement
This study intended to determine the significance of self-efficacy and support systems as predictors of behavioral strategies. Specifically, it achieved the following objectives:
1. To determine the levels of self-efficacy in terms of instructional self-efficacy and behavioral management; support systems in terms of administrative/policy support and colleague/peer support; and behavioral strategies in terms of instructional strategies and classroom management strategies
2. To determine the significance of the correlation between self-efficacy, support systems, and behavioral strategies
3. To determine the significance of the combined degree of influence of self-efficacy and support systems on the behavioral strategies of general education teachers

Hypotheses
The null hypotheses were examined at a significance level of 0.05.
1. Self-efficacy and support systems do not significantly correlate with behavioral strategies employed by general education teachers in handling learners with disabilities in inclusive classroom settings.
2. Self-efficacy and support systems do not significantly influence the behavioral strategies used by general education teachers in handling learners with disabilities in inclusive classroom settings.

Theoretical Framework
Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) as a theoretical framework posits that individual behavior, personal factors, and the environment have bidirectional relationships in order to gain desired outcomes (Schiavo et al., 2019). In this study, self-efficacy, the personal factor indicated by instructional self-efficacy and behavioral management (Gülsün et al., 2023), relates to general education teachers' confidence in handling learners with disabilities. Support systems, the environmental factor, indicated by administrative/policy and colleague/peer supports (Shogbesan et al., 2024). Behavioral strategies, the behavioral factor, are indicated by instructional strategies and classroom management strategies (Gilmour et al., 2022). Finally, this study is delimited only to three elements in the theory: the individual behavior, the environmental factor, and the desired outcome. The personal factor explained in the theory is excluded from this research.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This research used a quantitative method to gather and analyze numerical information related to the factors influencing behavioral strategies for managing learners with disabilities. Specifically, it used a descriptive approach to determine and characterize the levels of self-efficacy, support systems, and behavioral strategies among general education teachers in an inclusive setting. According to Stanley (2023), descriptive research seeks to explain current phenomena thoroughly, in this example, the levels of self-efficacy, support systems, and behavioral strategies, without changing any of the variables. Furthermore, a predictive method was used to examine the connection between behavioral strategies, support networks, and self-efficacy and how these variables predict instructors' behavioral techniques. In addition, a thorough assessment of predictive models in educational contexts was carried out by Almalawi et al. (2024), emphasizing the usefulness of such models in comprehending linkages and forecasting outcomes, precisely the goal of this study's predictive method. This combined approach allows a thorough understanding of how the predictive variables influence the behavioral strategies of general education teachers teaching in an inclusive setting.

Locale of the Study

This study was conducted within a private school in Davao City that incorporates learners with disabilities in an inclusive setting. Since the school mostly hires general education teachers, it offered an appropriate setting for investigating how teachers' self-efficacy and support systems affect their employment of behavioral strategies in handling learners with disabilities. The findings are most relevant to the teachers and the unique setting of this particular school, laying out insights into its distinctive, inclusive teaching methods.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The study involved 100 general education teachers from a private school in Davao City, selected through purposive sampling. These teachers had at least one year of experience and were currently handling learners with disabilities, even as the school was still developing its inclusive education policies. This sampling method ensured that participants had relevant, real-world experience (Meyer & Mayrhofer, 2022). Teachers with formal special education training, those not handling learners with disabilities, or with less than a year of experience were excluded. While the findings offer meaningful insights, they are specific to the school studied and may not reflect other educational contexts. The information acquired may not indicate other educational environments and is mainly relevant to the private school in Davao City, which is the subject of the study.

Research Instrument

To measure self-efficacy, this study utilized the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) developed by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001). This instrument gauges teachers' self-efficacy across three dimensions: student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management. The TSES is known in educational research for having strong psychometric properties and accurately capturing teachers' self-confidence in handling diverse learners. This aligns with the focus of the study, as it directly evaluates the competencies required to support learners with disabilities in general education settings (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). The Likert scale below was used to analyze the results of this section. The scale goes from 1 (Very Low) to 4 (Very High), which indicates better self-efficacy in teaching students with disabilities.

Level	Mean Interval	Descriptive Level	Descriptive Interpretation
4	3.26 – 4.00	Very High	Teacher self-efficacy is very good.
3	2.51 – 3.25	High Self-Efficacy	Teacher self-efficacy is good.
2	1.76 – 2.50	Low Self-Efficacy	Teacher self-efficacy is poor.
1	1.00 – 1.75	Very Low Self-Efficacy	Teacher self-efficacy is very poor.

In measuring support systems variables, most available instruments for measuring support systems, including the Teacher Support Scale (TSS) by McWhirter (1996), primarily assess students' perceptions of teacher support rather than teachers' perspectives of the support they receive within educational settings. With the focus of this

study on examining teachers' perceptions of the support they receive from administrators and peers in an inclusive classroom environment, these existing instruments do not fully align with the research objectives. Therefore, this study developed a customized questionnaire to measure teachers' perceptions of support systems relevant to their professional context. The new instrument was based on TSS by McWhirter (1996), adapting relevant items to reflect support structures pertinent to inclusive education settings. This section utilized a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Very Low) to 4 (Very High), where higher scores indicate stronger perceived support.

Level	Mean Interval	Descriptive Level	Descriptive Interpretation
4	3.26 – 4.00	Very High	The support system received by teachers is very strong.
3	2.51 – 3.25	High	The support system received by teachers is strong.
2	1.76 – 2.50	Low	The support system received by teachers is weak.
1	1.00 – 1.75	Very Low	The support system received by teachers is very weak.

The questionnaire for behavioral strategies was developed based on the insights from the Behavior and Instructional Management Scale (BIMS) by Martin and Sass (2010), which evaluated teachers' classroom management and instructional strategies and is aligned with literature on effective classroom management and instructional adaptation strategies in inclusive settings. The adaptation study by Sabanci and Özyildirim (2020), which validated the BIMS in a different cultural context, was used in creating questions that will serve the relevance to this study's objectives. The tailored questionnaire was developed to assess the behavioral strategies employed by general education teachers in handling learners with disabilities since no instruments specifically address this context. This section used the Likert scale with 1 (Very Low) to 4 (Very High). Higher values reflect more frequent and successful use of behavioral methods in managing students with disabilities.

Level	Mean Interval	Descriptive Level	Descriptive Interpretation
4	3.26 – 4.00	Very High	Teacher behavioral strategies are very good;
3	2.51 – 3.25	High	Teacher behavioral strategies are good;
2	1.76 – 2.50	Low	Teacher behavioral strategies are poor;
1	1.00 – 1.75	Very Low	Teacher behavioral strategies are very poor.

To guarantee reliability and validity, the questionnaire was first validated and then pilot-tested and reviewed by experts before full-scale administration. *To measure the strength of the correlation.* In measuring the correlation, this study utilized the standard scheme in determining the strength and the significance measure of the correlation. For the *r*-value, the following scheme is used:

Computed r	Descriptive Interpretation
+/- 1.00	Perfect correlation
Between +/- 0.75 – +/- 0.99	High correlation
Between +/- 0.51 – +/- 0.74	Moderately high correlation
Between +/- 0.31 – +/- 0.50	Moderately low correlation
Between +/- 0.01 – +/- 0.30	Low correlation
0.00	No correlation

Data Gathering Procedure

Before the study, the objectives and methodology were laid out for the people and offices involved. The proposal was sent to the Society for Moral Integrity and Legal Ethics (SMILE) for ethical assessment and approval. When it was approved, the academic institution offered its endorsement. Once the required endorsements were secured, a formal letter was sent to the Dean requesting support and permission to conduct the study. During the study,

the principal of the selected private school in Davao City was requested to approve it. Upon approval, a letter explaining the study's objectives and eligibility criteria and the fact that participation was voluntary was sent to the chosen respondents. The letters and questionnaires were sent to respondents' email addresses through Google Forms, and other respondents were given printed questionnaires for easy accessibility. The respondents were given enough time to fill out the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

A few statistical procedures were utilized for the collected data to examine the research questions. The levels of self-efficacy, support systems, and behavioral strategies among the participants were identified through the calculated weighted mean. Standard deviations and weighted means were computed to determine patterns of central tendency and data dispersion. The statistical data was examined using Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) to determine the relationship between behavioral strategies, support systems, and self-efficacy. The direction of linear connections and the strength between these variables were ascertained through statistical analysis. Finally, the predictive capacity of self-efficacy and support systems on the behavioral strategies teachers used was investigated through multiple regression analysis. This allowed the identification of important predictors while considering the other variables.

Limitations of the Study

In the interpretation of the results of this study, two main limitations were considered. First, the results could not be applied to other educational institutions, given the restricted sample size of the general education teachers from a particular school in Davao City. The purposive sample approach restricted the findings' generalization since it is suitable for obtaining the experiences within this school. Second, instead of using a fully validated, pre-existing scale, the support systems variable was measured using a modified questionnaire tailored to the needs and objectives of the study. The action may limit the comparisons with other studies that used fully validated scales, though meeting the specific study objectives was important.

Ethical Considerations

The protection of the identity of respondents and the confidentiality of data was maintained throughout the research procedure, following ethical standards. Respondents were informed that participation is optional and that they could leave at any time without facing consequences. Respondents were given clear instructions, and responses were anonymized to protect names and reduce potential dangers, such as emotional distress from thinking back on perceived support or self-efficacy. All data were also managed securely, and to avoid identifying specific people or sensitive information, the results were given in a general manner. Additionally, the study gave the respondents access to resources for help if they had trouble while taking part in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 presents a descriptive summary of teacher self-efficacy and support systems as predictors of teacher behavioral strategies. It also contains the standard deviation, mean, and corresponding descriptive level.

Table 1. Descriptive Table

Variables and Indicators	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Self-Efficacy	**0.62**	**2.60**	**High**
Instructional Self-Efficacy	0.64	2.49	Low
Behavioral Management	0.67	2.71	High
Support System	**0.61**	**2.27**	**Low**
Administrative/Policy Support	0.63	2.04	Low
Colleague/Peer Support	0.64	2.51	High
Behavioral Strategies	**0.63**	**2.45**	**Low**
Instructional Strategies	0.70	2.23	Low
Classroom Management Strategies	0.62	2.68	High

Based on the descriptive analysis of self-efficacy, the total mean is 2.60 (SD = 0.62), indicating a high level of perceived self-efficacy. This finding signifies that teacher self-efficacy is good. One of its indicators obtained a corresponding mean described as low level, while the other obtained a mean described as high level. The support systems variable's overall mean is 2.27 (SD = 0.61), which is classified as low level. This score means that teachers

generally believe they are not receiving enough assistance when accommodating learners with disabilities. One of its indicators obtained a mean described as low level, while the other obtained a mean described as high level. The overall mean for using behavioral techniques is 2.45 (SD = 0.63), which is classified as low level. One of its indicators obtained a mean described as low level, while the other obtained a mean described as high level.

Correlation Analysis

Table 2 is the correlation table. It contains the predictive variables, self-efficacy and support systems, and the criterion variable, behavioral strategies. Furthermore, it also contains the R-value, the p-value, the hypothesis decision, and the corresponding interpretation.

Table 2. Correlation Table

Predictive Variables	Criterion Variable			
	Behavioral Strategies			
	r	p-value	Decision on H_o	Interpretation
Self-Efficacy	.792	.000	Reject	Significant
Support System	.734	.000	Reject	Significant

Table 2 explicitly shows that the correlation between self-efficacy and behavioral strategies obtained a p-value of .000, which is less than a .05 degree of confidence. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. It indicates that the correlation between self-efficacy and behavioral strategies is significant. Furthermore, the correlation between self-efficacy and behavioral strategies obtained an r-value of .792, indicating a high correlation. Similarly, the correlation between support systems and behavioral strategies obtained a p-value of .000, which is also less than a .05 degree of confidence. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. It indicates that the correlation between support systems and behavioral strategies is significant. Furthermore, the correlation between support systems and behavioral strategies obtained an r-value of .734, indicating a high correlation.

Regression Analysis

Table 3 is a regression table. It contains the regression analysis of predictive variables, self-efficacy and support systems, and the criterion variable, behavioral strategies. Furthermore, it also contains the coefficient, the t-value, the p-value, the decision of the hypothesis, and the corresponding interpretation.

Table 3. Regression Table

Predictive Variables	Criterion Variable				
	Behavioral Strategies				
	Beta –Coefficient	t-value	p-value	Decision on H_0	Interpretation
(Constant)	.216	1.361	.177		
Self-Efficacy	.546	6.634	.000	Reject	Significant
Support System	.341	4.147	.000	Reject	Significant

$R = .827;\ R^2 = .683;\ F\text{-value} = 104.602;\ p\text{-value} = 0.000$

Table 3 explicitly shows that the self-efficacy predictive variable obtained a beta coefficient of .546, indicating that it has a 54.6 % degree of influence on the criterion variable, behavioral strategies. With the p-value of .000 obtained, which is less than a .05 degree of confidence, the null hypothesis was rejected. It indicates that the 54.6 % influence of self-efficacy on behavioral strategies is significant. This implies that for every unit increase in self-efficacy, there is a corresponding .546 unit increase in behavioral strategies holding the support system constant. Similarly, the support systems predictive variable obtained a beta coefficient of .341, indicating that it has a 34.1% degree of influence on the criterion variable, which is behavioral strategies. With the p-value of .000 obtained, which is less than a .05 degree of confidence, the null hypothesis was rejected. It indicates that the 34.1% influence of support systems on behavioral strategies is significant. This implies that for every unit increase in support systems, there is a corresponding .341 unit increase in behavioral strategies holding the self-efficacy constant. The combined degree of influence of the self-efficacy variable and the support systems variable on teacher behavioral strategies obtained an R-squared value of .683, which accounts for a combined degree of 68.3%. This combined degree of influence obtained a p-value of 0.000, which was less than 0.05 degree of confidence. Thus, the effect was significant. Finally, the statistical results show that the regression formula for teacher behavioral strategies is BS = 0.546 SE + .341 SS + .216. This also reveals that 31.7% of the variance is left unaccounted for,

indicating that teachers' behavioral strategies are likely influenced by additional variables, not variables not included in the model. Thus, teacher behavioral strategies may also be influenced by other factors not examined in this study.

Good Self-Efficacy among General Education Teachers

From the results presented in Table 1, the teachers in this particular school have good self-efficacy, though poor in instructional self-efficacy; they have good behavioral management strategies. This indicates/implies that although teachers have typical good self-efficacy in terms of behavioral management strategies, they may not have the necessary abilities or expertise to modify instruction for diverse learners.   This result aligns with the study's conceptual framework, which draws on Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986), emphasizing the role of self-efficacy in shaping behavior. Additionally, the findings affirm the claim of Strelow, Dort, Schwinger, and Christiansen (2021), which stated that poor instructional self-efficacy shows a possible lack of capacity to modify teaching methods, which is crucial in inclusive environments. They pointed out that teachers with very good self-efficacy are more inclined to use classroom management techniques that work for students with different needs. In this study, this particular school may have prioritized the development of teachers' abilities in behavioral management over enhancing teachers' instructional self-efficacy in handling learners with disabilities.

Weak Support System Received by General Education Teachers

The results in Table 1 also present the weak support systems from the working environment. However, teachers received strong support from colleagues and peers; they received weak support from the administration and policies of the institution. The weak support from administrative/policy support shows a possible absence of school administration guidelines, policies, and resources, which might contribute to the teachers' difficulties in handling learners with disabilities. However, the perceived strong support from colleagues/peers commends that teachers find support from their colleagues or peers. The results affirm the global issues raised by Mason-Williams et al. (2020) and Rizvi Jafree et al. (2022), which presented an absence of resources and weak support to general education teachers handling learners with disabilities in schools where inclusive practices are still establishing. Furthermore, the findings also support Beltran et al. (2024) and Lee and Kwon's (2022) ideas that a non-supportive working environment and a lack of opportunities for professional growth and development had a direct effect on behavior as well as the quality of life of teachers. Enhancing support systems may help teachers better oversee inclusive classrooms.

Poor Behavioral Strategies among General Education Teachers

Lastly, Table 1 also presents the poor behavioral strategies among general education teachers. While the result shows that teachers are good at classroom management strategies, they cannot apply instructional strategies appropriate to learners with disabilities in an inclusive setting. This result affirms Barnová, Kožuchová, Krásna, and Osaďan (2022), who mentioned that teachers' understandings of inclusive education significantly influence good teaching practices. This result also corroborates the phenomenological study of Cagape and Bauyot in 2024, which claimed that special education teachers face difficulties in implementing effective behavioral strategies in meeting the needs of students with disabilities, how much more so for those who have not undergone proper training, such as most of the general education teachers. This poor result in behavioral strategies of these teachers in this particular private school, particularly in instructional strategies, reveals a need to capacitate and train teachers to handle learners with disabilities. Additionally, teachers' good classroom management strategies may indicate that teachers are upholding discipline and order instead of providing customized instructional strategies.

Correlation Analysis

The findings on the correlation between self-efficacy and behavioral strategies demonstrate a strong correlation between the two variables. The study's findings affirm Carpen (2024), who mentioned that self-efficacy is a critical predictor of teacher behavioral strategies. The findings also support those of Strelow et al. (2021), who found that teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to demonstrate good and effective behavioral strategies. Similarly, the correlation between support systems and behavioral strategies indicates a strong correlation. Based on this study, teachers are more likely to have good behavioral strategies if they receive strong support systems, such as those provided by administrators, peers, or experts. The findings of this study affirm those of Wray, Sharma, and Subban (2022), who confirmed that educators who experience excellent administrative and collegial support can better manage the difficulties associated with inclusive education. Furthermore, this study is

consistent with Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory, which holds that personal and environmental factors influence behavior. In other words, when working with learners with disabilities in inclusive settings, teachers with very good self-efficacy and strong support demonstrate good behavioral strategies.

Regression Analysis

According to the findings in Table 3, the multiple regression analysis table, behavioral strategies are strongly predicted by self-efficacy and support systems. The high correlation value of both predictive variables reveals that self-efficacy and support systems are significant predictors of behavioral strategies. Since self-efficacy has a more significant predictive impact than support systems, raising teachers' self-efficacy may significantly influence their use of successful and effective strategies. This study's findings consistently align with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986), which places high regard on the significance of personal and environmental factors as crucial behavioral components. Furthermore, this study affirms the claim of Barnová et al. (2022) that high self-efficacy and strong support systems have strong predictive potential to improve and strengthen teachers' behavior in applying effective strategies in educational situations. This magnifies the value of strengthening these foundations for schools still in the process of establishing inclusive education. This gives insights into offering important training and programs that boost teachers' self-efficacy and strengthen support that may help schools build more inclusive and effective learning environments for learners with disabilities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on this study's results, behavioral strategies are significantly predicted by self-efficacy and support networks. This conclusion validates the Social Cognitive Theory, which holds that in order to achieve desired results, there are bidirectional linkages between personal factors, individual behavior, and the environment.

Based on the conclusion of the study, it is recommended that further multiple regression research be undertaken using other potential predictors to account for the 32.7% variance in behavioral strategies of teachers handling learners with disabilities. Moreover, it is recommended that qualitative research be initiated to explore teachers' lived experiences in handling learners with disabilities, as well as the perspectives of learners with disabilities on inclusive education.

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