

---

**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**The Relationship Between SNEd Teachers' Self-Efficacy, Empathy, and the Academic Performance of Students with Special Needs in A Philippine School**

**Gina Aniñon<sup>1</sup>, Marila Sangrador<sup>2</sup>, Maricris Lamadora<sup>3</sup>, and Melody Ann Aguilar<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>123</sup>*University of San Carlos, Philippines*

<sup>4</sup>*Zapatera Special Education School, Philippines*

**Corresponding Author:** Gina Aniñon, **E-mail:** [ginsmile24@gmail.com](mailto:ginsmile24@gmail.com)

---

**| ABSTRACT**

This research examined the relationship between Special Needs Education (SNED) teachers' self-efficacy, empathy, and the academic performance of students with special needs at the University of San Carlos - Basic Education Department South Campus Elementary School during the school year 2024–2025. Utilizing a descriptive-correlational design, the study employed complete enumeration of 23 SNED teachers as respondents. Self-efficacy was assessed across seven sub-domains namely decision-making, school resource influence, instructional strategies, behavioral management, parental and community involvement, and school climate using Bandura's (1997) Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale. Teacher empathy was measured using the Teacher Empathy Scale by Tanhan, Kasap, Hasan, and Ünsal (2022). Academic performance data were collected from 46 students with special needs assigned to these teachers. The findings revealed that SNED teachers had high to very high levels of self-efficacy, particularly in managing discipline, fostering parental involvement, and creating a positive school climate. Empathy was also rated very high among teachers. Most students demonstrated "Very Satisfactory" academic performance, with an average score of 83.59. Of all variables tested, only the self-efficacy domain related to influencing school resources showed a statistically significant moderate positive correlation with student academic performance. No significant relationships were found between student performance and the other domains of self-efficacy or empathy. Based on these findings, an action plan was proposed to strengthen inclusive education through enhanced teacher training, school- community collaboration, and resource support.

**| KEYWORDS**

Special Education, SNED teachers, teacher self-efficacy, teacher empathy, academic performance, inclusive education, special needs students

**| ARTICLE INFORMATION**

**ACCEPTED:** 11 April 2026

**PUBLISHED:** 08 May 2026

**DOI:** 10.32996/jlds.2026.6.6.5

---

**Introduction**

Inclusive education had become a globally recognized imperative, grounded in the belief that all learners regardless of ability deserved equitable access to quality education in a supportive, non-discriminatory environment. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 emphasized inclusive and equitable education for all by 2030, highlighting that inclusive education benefited not only students with disabilities but also their typically developing peers by fostering mutual respect, diversity, equity, and social cohesion (UNESCO, 2015). Globally, research had demonstrated that inclusive practices improved social interaction, academic achievement, and community integration (Florian & Black- Hawkins, 2011).

However, the success of inclusion significantly depended on the competencies of the teachers tasked with implementing it. Teacher self-efficacy the belief in one's ability to influence student engagement and learning had consistently been linked to improved instructional quality and student outcomes (Bandura, 1997; Yada & Savolainen, 2017). Likewise, empathy, defined

as the ability to understand and respond to students' emotions, played a pivotal role in enhancing teacher-student relationships, classroom management, and emotional regulation (Graziano et al., 2024). Studies also showed that high levels of teacher empathy, when supported by emotional self-efficacy, could mitigate stress and prevent burnout, particularly in inclusive settings (Cumming et al., 2022).

In Southeast Asia, inclusive education had gained momentum, yet its implementation remained uneven due to systemic, cultural, and infrastructural barriers. Many countries in the region had introduced inclusive education policies, but teacher training, funding, and assessment of inclusive practices remained underdeveloped (Hosshan et al., 2020). For instance, teacher preparedness varied widely, with limited access to pre-service and in-service training in inclusive strategies. These barriers affected the fidelity of inclusive education and the quality of support provided to learners with disabilities.

In the Philippine context, Republic Act No. 11650, or the Inclusive Education Act of 2022, represented a major policy milestone. It mandated the establishment of inclusive learning resource centers and ensured the right of every learner with disability to inclusive education (Congress of the Philippines, 2022). Despite this legislative progress, several challenges persisted. Allam and Martin (2021) noted that a significant number of Filipino SPED teachers lacked formal training in special needs education. Compounding this issue were limited instructional materials, a lack of individualized learning plans, and minimal emotional support training, which directly impacted both teacher confidence and student learning outcomes.

An experience as a researcher handling inclusive education further revealed a firsthand gap in teacher self-efficacy, particularly in managing students with special disabilities. In one observed case involving 39 students, challenges arose not only from a lack of knowledge in addressing diverse learning needs, but also from the absence of administrative support and training on developing individualized learning plans. The difficulty was intensified by the unavailability of instructional materials and support staff. For example, when one student with a disability required assistance in going to the restroom, the teacher had to call a janitor to help an arrangement necessitated by the impossibility of leaving the remaining 38 students unattended. This scenario illustrated just one of the many unaddressed challenges faced by inclusive educators on a daily basis.

Moreover, while national reforms had attempted to address technical and logistical gaps, there remained a dearth of research focusing on the psychological and emotional capacities of teachers particularly their self-efficacy and empathy as crucial mediators of inclusive education success. The Department of Education (DepEd) had launched various professional development programs, but few integrated components on emotional intelligence or sustained teacher efficacy (Chitiyo et al., 2024).

This study addressed a critical gap in the literature by examining the relationship between SNED teachers' self-efficacy and empathy, and the academic performance of students with special needs. Most existing studies had either focused on attitudes toward inclusion or system-level policy evaluations; few had investigated how these teacher variables concretely affected student outcomes within the Philippine inclusive education system. The research thus aimed to generate empirical evidence to inform policy enhancements, tailor teacher development programs, and improve classroom-level inclusive practices.

## **Literature Review**

SNED teachers' self-efficacy is an important factor in the delivery of inclusive and responsive instruction because it reflects teachers' belief in their capacity to make instructional decisions, influence school resources, manage classroom behavior, involve parents and the community, and create a positive school climate for learners with disabilities. In the Philippine context, DepEd Order No. 044, s. 2021 emphasizes the provision of educational programs and services for learners with disabilities in the K to 12 Basic Education Program, making teacher competence, support systems, and inclusive practices central to SNED implementation (Department of Education, 2021). Recent studies support this view by showing that teacher self-efficacy is connected not only to instruction and classroom management but also to school-level factors such as collaboration, instructional leadership, and teacher participation in school processes (Holzberger & Prestele, 2021). Woodcock, Sharma, Subban, and Hitches (2022) found that teachers with high and low self-efficacy may share similar beliefs about inclusion, but their actual inclusive practices differ, suggesting that confidence must be supported by training and practical school resources. Similarly, Woodcock, Gibbs, Hitches, and Regan (2023) reported that teachers who believe inclusive education is effective showed higher self-efficacy in student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management. This supports the need to examine the different dimensions of SNED teachers' self-efficacy, especially their ability to influence decision-making, obtain resources, provide instruction, manage discipline, and build a supportive school climate. Moreover, Theobald, Goldhaber, Holden, and Stein (2022) found that students with high-incidence disabilities had stronger reading gains when special education teacher preparation and district literacy practices were aligned with evidence-based instruction. Parental involvement also matters, as Wahyuni and Mangunsong (2022) found a significant relationship between parental involvement and the perceived academic achievement of children with special education needs.

Empathy is another essential quality among SNED teachers because teaching learners with special needs requires sensitivity to students' emotional, behavioral, social, and learning difficulties. Graziano et al. (2024) emphasized that teacher empathy

contributes to better teacher-student interaction, motivation, and academic performance, although empathy must be supported by emotional self-efficacy so that teachers do not become overwhelmed by stress or emotional fatigue. Jiang, Li, Ju, Kong, and Li (2025) also found that pre-service teachers' empathy predicted teaching motivation, inclusive education efficacy, and attitudes toward inclusive education, showing that empathy strengthens teachers' readiness to support learners with diverse needs. A systematic review by Calandri et al. (2025) further explained that teachers' emotional competence, including empathy and emotion regulation, is linked to inclusion indicators such as student engagement, classroom climate, teacher-student relationships, and academic outcomes. This means that empathy helps SNED teachers understand learners' needs, communicate with patience, respond to behavioral challenges, and build emotionally safe classrooms. In relation to student performance, Sainz et al. (2025) found that inclusive classroom-based support was associated with improvements in academic performance and self-concept, particularly among students with learning difficulties and special educational needs. Thus, the academic performance of students with special needs should be interpreted as a product of both academic support and socio-emotional support.

**Methodology**

This study employed a descriptive-correlational quantitative research design to determine the levels of self-efficacy and empathy among Special Needs Education (SNED) teachers and examine their relationship with the academic performance of students with special needs. This design was appropriate because it described existing conditions and measured the degree and direction of relationships among variables without manipulating them, making it suitable for an educational setting. The study was conducted at USC-BED South Campus Elementary School, located at J. Alcantara Street, Cebu City. The school was selected because of its structured implementation of inclusive education programs and the presence of trained SNED teachers handling learners with special needs. The respondents of the study were the SNED teachers of the selected school, while the academic performance data were obtained from the grades of students with special needs. A structured survey questionnaire was used as the main research instrument. It was adapted from established scales by Bandura (1997) for teacher self-efficacy and Tanhan et al. (2022) for teacher empathy. The self-efficacy scale measured areas such as decision-making, school resources, instructional strategies, discipline, parental involvement, community involvement, and positive school climate. A 9-point Likert scale was used for self-efficacy, while a 5-point Likert scale was used for empathy. Students' academic performance was interpreted using the DepEd grading scale. Ethical procedures were observed throughout the study. Informed consent was secured from the participants, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained. The data gathered were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine levels and correlational analysis to test the relationship among the study variables.

**Results**

Table 1. SNED Teachers' Self-Efficacy to Influence Decision Making

S/N	Indicators	$\bar{x}$	SD	Verbal Description
1	How much can you influence decisions related to inclusive education in your school?	6.30	1.58	Moderately High
2	How much can you express your views on policies affecting students with special needs?	6.57	1.20	High
3	How much can you advocate for necessary resources and support for inclusive education?	6.57	1.24	High
4	How much can you participate in planning and implementing programs for students with special needs?	6.65	1.37	High
5	How much can you impact the training and professional development opportunities for inclusive education in your school?	6.48	1.44	High
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	6.51		High
	Aggregate Standard Deviation		1.35	

The table shows that SNED teachers have a high level of self-efficacy to influence decision-making, as reflected by the aggregate weighted mean of 6.51. This means that teachers generally believe they can participate in school decisions related to inclusive education. The highest mean was on participating in planning and implementing programs for students with special needs (6.65), indicating strong confidence in program involvement. However, influencing decisions related to inclusive education received the lowest mean (6.30), described as moderately high. Overall, the result suggests that SNED teachers feel

capable of contributing to school policies, programs, and support systems for inclusive education.

Table 2. SNED Teachers' Self-Efficacy to Influence School Resources

S/N Indicators	$\bar{x}$	SD	Verbal Description
6 How much can you do to secure instructional materials specifically designed for students with special needs?	6.65	1.47	High
7 How much can you influence the allocation of assistive technology and adaptive equipment in your school?	6.09	1.44	Moderately High
8 How much can you advocate for sufficient classroom resources to effectively implement inclusive education?	6.30	1.49	Moderately High
9 How much can you contribute to decisions regarding the funding and procurement of special education materials?	6.00	1.71	Moderately High
10 How much can you ensure that your school provides appropriate learning accommodations for students with disabilities?	6.61	1.56	High
Aggregate Weighted Mean	6.33		Moderately High
Aggregate Standard Deviation		1.53	

The table shows that SNED teachers have a moderately high level of self-efficacy to influence school resources, with an aggregate weighted mean of 6.33. This indicates that teachers feel fairly capable of helping secure and advocate for resources needed in inclusive education. The highest mean was on securing instructional materials for students with special needs (6.65), followed by ensuring appropriate learning accommodations (6.61), both described as high. However, contributing to funding and procurement decisions received the lowest mean (6.00). Overall, the result suggests that teachers are confident in advocating for resources but may have limited influence over budget-related decisions.

The table 3 shows that SNED teachers have a high level of instructional self-efficacy, as indicated by the aggregate weighted mean of 6.84. This means that teachers generally believe they can effectively support students with special needs in the learning process. The highest-rated indicators were engaging and supporting students with learning difficulties and motivating students with little interest in schoolwork, both with a mean of 7.26, described as very high. However, influencing class sizes received the lowest mean of 5.91, described as moderately high. Overall, SNED teachers are confident in their instructional abilities, especially in motivating and supporting learners.

Table 3. SNED Teachers' Instructional Self-Efficacy

S/N Indicators	$\bar{x}$	SD	Verbal Description
11 How much can you do to influence class sizes to better support inclusive education?	5.91	1.95	Moderately High
12 How much can you do to engage and support students who struggle with learning difficulties?	7.26	1.05	Very High
13 How much can you do to foster student learning despite a lack of parental or home support?	6.74	1.25	High
14 How much can you do to maintain student focus and persistence on challenging assignments?	7.04	1.19	High
15 How much can you do to motivate students who show little interest in schoolwork?	7.26	0.92	Very High
Aggregate Weighted Mean	6.84		High
Aggregate Standard Deviation		1.39	

Table 4. SNED Teachers' Disciplinary Self-Efficacy

S/N Indicators	$\bar{x}$	SD	Verbal Description
16 How much can you do to ensure that students follow classroom rules consistently?	7.70	0.93	Very High
17 How much can you do to manage and minimize disruptive behavior in the classroom?	7.35	1.27	Very High
18 How much can you do to prevent behavioral issues from occurring on school grounds?	7.48	0.99	Very High
19 How much can you do to create a positive and structured classroom environment that promotes good behavior?	7.87	0.76	Very High
20 How much can you do to effectively address and resolve conflicts among students?	7.87	0.87	Very High
Aggregate Weighted Mean	7.65		Very High
Aggregate Standard Deviation		0.98	

The table shows that SNED teachers have a very high level of disciplinary self-efficacy, as reflected by the aggregate weighted mean of 7.65. This means that teachers strongly believe they can manage classroom behavior and maintain discipline among students with special needs. The highest-rated indicators were creating a positive and structured classroom environment and resolving conflicts among students, both with a mean of 7.87. Meanwhile, managing and minimizing disruptive behavior received the lowest mean of 7.35, but it is still described as very high. Overall, SNED teachers are highly confident in promoting order, structure, and positive behavior.

Table 5. SNED Teachers' Self-Efficacy to Enlist Parental Involvement

S/N Indicators	$\bar{x}$	SD	Verbal Description
21 How much can you do to encourage parents to actively participate in school activities?	7.52	1.04	Very High
22 How much can you assist parents in supporting their children's academic success?	7.43	0.99	Very High
23 How much can you do to make parents feel welcomed and comfortable engaging with the school?	7.52	1.12	Very High
24 How much can you do to strengthen communication between teachers and parents regarding student progress?	7.61	1.12	Very High
25 How much can you do to involve parents in decision-making processes related to their children's education?	7.65	1.11	Very High
Aggregate Weighted Mean	7.55		Very High
Aggregate Standard Deviation		1.06	

The table shows that SNED teachers have a very high level of self-efficacy to enlist parental involvement, with an aggregate weighted mean of 7.55. This indicates that teachers strongly believe they can encourage parents to participate in school activities and support their children's learning. The highest mean was on involving parents in decision-making processes related to their children's education (7.65), followed by strengthening communication regarding student progress (7.61). The lowest mean was on assisting parents in supporting academic success (7.43), but it is still very high. Overall, SNED teachers are highly confident in building strong home-school partnerships.

S/N Indicators	$\bar{x}$	SD	Verbal Description
26 How much can you do to engage community groups in collaborating with the school?	6.87	1.29	High
27 How much can you do to encourage churches to support school initiatives and programs?	6.57	1.27	High
28 How much can you do to involve local businesses in contributing to school activities and resources?	6.13	1.22	Moderately High

S/N Indicators	$\bar{x}$	SD	Verbal Description
29 How much can you do to establish partnerships with colleges and universities to support student learning and school programs?	5.91	1.50	Moderately High
30 How much can you do to involve families and the broader community to enhance educational opportunities?	6.13	1.32	Moderately High
Aggregate Weighted Mean	6.32		Moderately High
Aggregate Standard Deviation		1.35	

Table 6. SNED Teachers' Self-Efficacy to Enlist Community Involvement

The table shows that SNED teachers have a moderately high level of self-efficacy to enlist community involvement, as indicated by the aggregate weighted mean of 6.32. This means that teachers believe they can involve external groups in supporting inclusive education, although there is still room for improvement. The highest mean was on engaging community groups in collaborating with the school (6.87), described as high. Meanwhile, establishing partnerships with colleges and universities received the lowest mean (5.91), described as moderately high. Overall, SNED teachers are capable of building community linkages, but stronger partnerships with institutions and local stakeholders may still be enhanced.

Table 7. SNED Teachers' Self-Efficacy to Create a Positive School Climate

S/N Indicators	$\bar{x}$	SD	Verbal Description
31 How much can you do to ensure that the school is a safe and supportive environment for all students?	7.61	1.12	Very High
32 How much can you do to foster a school culture where students enjoy learning and attending classes?	7.61	1.03	Very High
33 How much can you do to build trust between students and teachers?	7.74	0.75	Very High
34 How much can you do to enhance collaboration between teachers and the administration for a more effective school environment?	7.74	0.75	Very High
35 How much can you do to encourage students to believe in their ability to succeed academically?	7.96	0.82	Very High
Aggregate Weighted Mean	7.73		Very High
Aggregate Standard Deviation		0.90	

The table shows that SNED teachers have a very high level of self-efficacy to create a positive school climate, as reflected by the aggregate weighted mean of 7.73. This means that teachers strongly believe they can help establish a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment for all students. The highest mean was on encouraging students to believe in their ability to succeed academically (7.96), indicating strong confidence in motivating learners. The lowest means were on ensuring a safe and supportive environment and fostering a culture where students enjoy learning, both at 7.61, but still very high. Overall, SNED teachers are highly confident in promoting a positive school climate.

The table 8 shows that SNED teachers have a very high level of empathy, as reflected by the aggregate weighted mean of 4.71. This means that teachers consistently recognize, understand, and respond to the emotional and learning needs of students with special needs. The highest mean was on communicating in a way that makes students feel understood and valued (4.91), showing strong teacher sensitivity and care. The lowest mean was on identifying when a student is upset even without direct expression (4.35), but it is still very high. Overall, SNED teachers demonstrate strong empathy in managing and supporting their learners.

Table 8. SNED Teachers' Empathy

S/N	Indicators	$\bar{x}$	SD	Verbal Description
1	I can recognize how my students feel by observing their behavior and expressions.	4.52	0.51	Very High
2	When students struggle emotionally, I acknowledge their feelings while maintaining classroom rules.	4.65	0.49	Very High
3	I adjust my approach based on my students' emotional and learning needs.	4.65	0.57	Very High
4	I can identify when a student is upset, even if they do not express it directly.	4.35	0.57	Very High
5	I try to understand the reasons behind my students' challenging behaviors.	4.61	0.50	Very High
6	When conflicts arise, I listen to my students' concerns before responding.	4.87	0.34	Very High
7	I consider the emotional well-being of students when implementing classroom policies.	4.87	0.34	Very High
8	I use a compassionate approach when handling disruptive behavior in students with special needs.	4.78	0.42	Very High
9	I believe that showing empathy positively impacts my students' motivation and learning progress.	4.87	0.34	Very High
10	I communicate in a way that makes my students feel understood and valued.	4.91	0.29	Very High
Aggregate Weighted Mean		4.71		Very High
Aggregate Standard Deviation			0.47	

Table 9. Academic Performance of the Students

Level	Scoring Range	f	%
Outstanding	90–100	0	0.00
Very Satisfactory	85–89	25	54.35
Satisfactory	80–84	15	32.61
Fairly Satisfactory	75–79	5	10.87
Did Not Meet the Expectations	Below 75	1	2.17
Total		46	100.00
Average		83.59	
Standard Deviation		4.15	

The table shows that the students with special needs had an average academic performance of 83.59, which falls under the Satisfactory level. Most of the students, or 25 out of 46 learners (54.35%), were classified as Very Satisfactory, while 15 students (32.61%) were under the Satisfactory level. Only 5 students (10.87%) were rated Fairly Satisfactory, and 1 student (2.17%) did not meet expectations. No student reached the Outstanding level. The standard deviation of 4.15 indicates that the students' grades were fairly close to the average. Overall, the students demonstrated acceptable academic performance.

Table 10. Test of Significant Relationship Between SNED Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Academic Performance of the Students

Paired Variables with Academic Performance	Spearman's Rho	Strength of Correlation	p-value	Decision	Result
Self-efficacy to Influence Decision Making	0.143	Very Weak Positive	0.517	Do Not Reject Ho	Not Significant
Self-efficacy to Influence School Resources	0.463	Moderate Positive	0.026*	Reject Ho	Significant
Instructional Self-Efficacy	0.172	Very Weak Positive	0.432	Do Not Reject Ho	Not Significant
Disciplinary Self-Efficacy	0.055	Very Weak Positive	0.803	Do Not Reject Ho	Not Significant

Paired Variables with Academic Performance	Spearman's Rho	Strength of Correlation	p-value	Decision	Result
Self-efficacy to Enlist Parental Involvement	0.052	Very Weak Positive	0.400	Do Not Reject Ho	Not Significant
Self-efficacy to Enlist Community Involvement	0.155	Very Weak Positive	0.481	Do Not Reject Ho	Not Significant
Self-efficacy to Create a Positive School Climate	0.100	Very Weak Positive	0.650	Do Not Reject Ho	Not Significant

Significant at  $p < 0.05$ , two-tailed.

The table shows that among the different dimensions of SNED teachers' self-efficacy, only self-efficacy to influence school resources had a significant relationship with students' academic performance, with a Spearman's rho of 0.463 and a p-value of 0.026. This indicates a moderate positive relationship, meaning that higher teacher confidence in securing resources, assistive technology, accommodations, and instructional materials is associated with better student academic performance. Meanwhile, the other dimensions showed very weak positive relationships and were not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected only for school resources and retained for the other self-efficacy areas.

Table 11. Test of Significant Relationship Between SNED Teacher's Empathy and Academic Performance of the Students

Paired Variables	Spearman's Rho	Strength of Correlation	p-value	Decision	Result
SNED Teacher's Empathy and Academic Performance	0.143	Very Weak Positive	0.515	Do Not Reject Ho	Not Significant

The table shows that SNED teachers' empathy has a very weak positive relationship with the academic performance of students with special needs, as indicated by the Spearman's rho value of 0.143. This means that as teachers' empathy increases, students' academic performance may also slightly improve; however, the relationship is very minimal. Since the p-value of 0.515 is greater than 0.05, the relationship is not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This suggests that empathy is important for emotional and social support, but it did not directly influence students' academic performance in this study.

### Discussion

The findings show that SNED teachers generally possessed favorable levels of self-efficacy across the different dimensions. They rated themselves high in influencing decision-making and instructional self-efficacy, moderately high in influencing school resources and enlisting community involvement, and very high in disciplinary self-efficacy, parental involvement, and creating a positive school climate. These results suggest that the teachers were confident in managing classroom behavior, communicating with parents, motivating learners, and maintaining a supportive school environment for students with special needs. Their strongest areas were discipline, parental involvement, and positive school climate, which means they were highly capable of establishing order, building partnerships with parents, and encouraging students to believe in their academic abilities. However, the lower ratings in school resources and community involvement indicate that teachers may still need stronger institutional support, wider community partnerships, access to assistive technology, and greater participation in resource-related decisions. The very high level of empathy also shows that SNED teachers were emotionally responsive, compassionate, and sensitive to the needs of their learners. This is important because learners with special needs require not only academic instruction but also patience, understanding, emotional support, and positive teacher-student relationships.

In terms of student outcomes, the students with special needs obtained an average grade of 83.59, interpreted as Satisfactory, with most learners falling under the Very Satisfactory and Satisfactory categories. This indicates that the learners were generally performing acceptably in their academic work. However, the correlation results revealed that most dimensions of teacher self-efficacy were not significantly related to students' academic performance. Only self-efficacy to influence school resources showed a significant moderate positive relationship with academic performance, suggesting that access to appropriate instructional materials, accommodations, assistive technology, and special education resources may have a more direct connection to student achievement. This implies that even when teachers are confident, empathetic, and skilled in classroom management, student academic success may still depend heavily on the availability of concrete learning supports. The result on empathy also showed a very weak positive but non-significant relationship with academic performance, meaning that empathy may help students feel

supported and valued, but it may not directly translate into higher grades. Overall, the findings suggest that improving academic performance among students with special needs requires both teacher-related strengths and adequate school resources, especially materials and accommodations that directly support learning needs.

## Conclusion

The results of this study led to several key conclusions regarding the self-efficacy and empathy of SNED (Special Needs Education) teachers and their relationship to the academic performance of students with special needs. First, SNED teachers generally exhibited high to very high levels of self-efficacy across most domains. They felt particularly confident in their ability to manage classroom discipline, foster a positive school climate, and involve parents in the educational process. These findings suggested that teachers in inclusive settings perceived themselves as capable and proactive in supporting students with diverse needs through both instructional strategies and relationship-building practices. Second, the SNED teachers demonstrated very high levels of empathy. They consistently reported being sensitive to students' emotions, adjusting their approaches based on students' needs, and maintaining compassionate communication. This indicated that they were able to build trusting and emotionally supportive relationships, a trait essential to inclusive teaching. Third, students under the instruction of SNED teachers generally performed well academically. The majority of learners achieved grades in the Very Satisfactory and Satisfactory ranges, with only a small percentage falling below expectations. The consistency of academic performance suggested that the inclusive learning environment supported by SNED teachers contributed to stable educational outcomes. Fourth, among the seven domains of teacher self-efficacy, only the domain related to influencing school resources had a statistically significant and moderately positive relationship with student academic performance. This suggested that when teachers felt capable of accessing and utilizing resources such as instructional materials and assistive tools students were more likely to achieve better academic results. This finding underscored the importance of institutional support in equipping teachers with the tools necessary for inclusive education. Lastly, the study found no significant relationship between teacher empathy and student academic performance. Although empathy is essential for creating a supportive classroom climate and reducing student stress, it did not appear to directly influence academic achievement in this context. This implied that while empathy enhances the emotional quality of teaching, it may not by itself be a predictor of academic success.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Publisher's Note:** All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

## References

- [1]. Allam, F. C., & Martin, M. M. (2021). Issues and challenges in special education: A qualitative analysis from teacher's perspective. *Southeast Asia Early Childhood Journal*, 10(1), 37–49. <https://doi.org/10.37134/saecj.vol10.1.4.2021>
- [2]. Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W. H. Freeman.
- [3]. Calandri, E., Mastrokoukou, S., Marchisio, C., Monchietto, A., & Graziano, F. (2025). Teacher emotional competence for inclusive education: A systematic review. *Behavioral Sciences*, 15(3), 359. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs15030359>
- [4]. Chitiyo, J., Simone, K., Salayo, J., & Chitiyo, A. (2024). The status of inclusive education in the Philippines: An examination of teacher perceptions and knowledge. *Asian Journal of Inclusive Education*, 12(1), 19–37. <https://doi.org/10.59595/ajie.12.1.2>
- [5]. Congress of the Philippines. (2022). *Republic Act No. 11650: An Act instituting a policy of inclusion and services for learners with disabilities in support of inclusive education, establishing inclusive learning resource centers of learners with disabilities in all school districts, municipalities and cities, providing for standards, appropriating funds therefor, and for other purposes*.
- [6]. Department of Education. (2012). *DepEd Order No. 73, s. 2012: Guidelines on the assessment and rating of learning outcomes under the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum*.
- [7]. Department of Education. (2021). *DepEd Order No. 044, s. 2021: Policy guidelines on the provision of educational programs and services for learners with disabilities in the K to 12 Basic Education Program*.
- [8]. Florian, L., & Black-Hawkins, K. (2011). Exploring inclusive pedagogy. *British Educational Research Journal*, 37(5), 813–828. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411926.2010.501096>
- [9]. Graziano, F., Mastrokoukou, S., Monchietto, A., Marchisio, C., & Calandri, E. (2024). The moderating role of emotional self-efficacy and gender in teacher empathy and inclusive education. *Scientific Reports*, 14, 22587. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-70836-2>
- [10]. Holzberger, D., & Prestele, E. (2021). Teacher self-efficacy and self-reported cognitive activation and classroom

- management: A multilevel perspective on the role of school characteristics. *Learning and Instruction*, 76, 101513. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2021.101513>
- [11]. Hosshan, H., Stancliffe, R. J., Villeneuve, M., & Bonati, M. L. (2020). Inclusive schooling in Southeast Asian countries: A scoping review of the literature. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 21, 99–119. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-019-09613-0>
- [12]. Jiang, N., Li, H., Ju, S. Y., Kong, L. K., & Li, J. (2025). Pre-service teachers' empathy and attitudes toward inclusive education—The chain mediating role of teaching motivation and inclusive education efficacy. *PLOS ONE*, 20(4), e0321066. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0321066>
- [13]. Sainz, V., Álvarez-Arjona, J. J., & Gómez-Gutiérrez, J. L. (2025). Self-concept and academic performance in students with and without learning difficulties: A longitudinal study in an inclusive school setting. *SAGE Open*, 15(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440251356072>
- [14]. Siedlecki, S. L. (2020). Understanding descriptive research designs and methods. *Clinical Nurse Specialist*, 34(1), 8–12. <https://doi.org/10.1097/NUR.0000000000000493>
- [15]. Tanhan, F., Kasap, S., Hasan, F., & Ünsal, F. (2022). Development of Teacher Empathy Scale: A study of validity and reliability. *Humanistic Perspective*, 4(3), 493–511. <https://doi.org/10.47793/hp.1049794>
- [16]. Theobald, R. J., Goldhaber, D. D., Holden, K. L., & Stein, M. L. (2022). Special education teacher preparation, literacy instructional alignment, and reading achievement for students with high-incidence disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 88(4), 381–400. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00144029221081236>
- [17]. UNESCO. (2015). *Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all*. UNESCO.
- [18]. Wahyuni, C., & Mangunsong, F. M. (2022). Parental involvement and the achievement of students with special education needs in Indonesia. *Exceptionality Education International*, 32(1), 14–34. <https://doi.org/10.5206/eei.v32i1.14871>
- [19]. Woodcock, S., Gibbs, K., Hitches, E., & Regan, C. (2023). Investigating teachers' beliefs in inclusive education and their levels of teacher self-efficacy: Are teachers constrained in their capacity to implement inclusive teaching practices? *Education Sciences*, 13(3), 280. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13030280>
- [20]. Woodcock, S., Sharma, U., Subban, P., & Hitches, E. (2022). Teacher self-efficacy and inclusive education practices: Rethinking teachers' engagement with inclusive practices. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 117, 103802. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2022.103802>
- [21]. Yada, A., & Savolainen, H. (2017). Japanese in-service teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education and self-efficacy for inclusive practices. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 64, 222–229. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.02.005>