

Inclusive Education: Navigating the Implementation and Challenges Among Public Elementary Teachers in Las Piñas City, Philippines

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Abstract. This study examined the level of implementation and challenges of inclusive education among public elementary school teachers in the DepEd Division of Las Piñas City. A quantitative research design was used, with data collected from 251 teachers through structured questionnaires and selected via simple random sampling. The findings indicate a high level of inclusive education implementation, particularly in physical infrastructure, teacher attitudes, awareness, and policies. However, significant challenges remain, such as inadequate infrastructure, teacher biases, lack of awareness, and inconsistent policies. Age significantly influenced the level of implementation, while teaching experience affected the challenges encountered. A weak positive correlation was observed between implementation levels and challenges. To address these issues, the "Inclusive Education Excellence Initiative (IEEI)" was proposed, focusing on professional development, infrastructure improvement, and fostering inclusivity. Recommendations include targeted training for younger teachers, expanding current initiatives, and developing comprehensive support systems.

Keywords: Discriminatory policies; Inclusive education; Physical infrastructure; Professional development; Teacher preparedness.

1.0 Introduction

Education is a fundamental right that should be accessible to everyone, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. To provide learning settings that meet the unique requirements of all students, inclusive education has become more and more popular in recent decades. Despite being a widely recognized worldwide objective, inclusive education faces significant obstacles in its successful local implementation, such as in the DepEd Division of Las Piñas City. Inclusive education, as defined by Del Corro-Tiangco as cited by (Cristina Nieves Aligada-Halal, 2020), is an educational practice that integrates students with disabilities into general education classrooms under the supervision of a general education teacher. This approach is rooted in the belief that every child has the inherent right to be educated equally with their peers, irrespective of differences. Despite global initiatives promoting inclusive education, the challenges to its successful implementation persist, particularly in the context of public schools in Las Piñas City.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948; United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989; and Education for All Movement, launched in 1990 by the World Bank, UNESCO, UNFPA, and UNICEF, supports

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this notion. This international commitment aims to give all children, youth, and adults access to high-quality basic education. In the Philippines, the 1987 Constitution guarantees the right to education for every Filipino. It stated, "The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make education accessible to all." The right of every Filipino to quality basic education is further emphasized in Republic Act 9155 or the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001. Along with Republic Act 6655 or the Free Secondary Education Act, these laws reaffirm the policy of the State to protect and promote the rights of all Filipinos by providing children with free and compulsory education at the elementary and high school levels. This idea of inclusive education was introduced by the Department of Education in 2009 through DepEd Order number 72. The Department of Education describes inclusive education in the aforementioned DepEd Order as accepting all children regardless of race, size, shape, color, ability, or disability with support from school staff, students, parents, and the community.

The enactment of House Bill 3311 by the 18th Congress on August 1, 2019, further solidified the notion of inclusive education in the Philippines. Representative Camille A. Villar of Las Piñas City's lone district authored the aforementioned house bill, which is titled "An Act Instituting Inclusive Education, Establishing Inclusive Education Learning Resource Centers for Children and Youth with Special Needs (Cysns) in All Public School Divisions, Providing for Standards and Guidelines, and Appropriating Funds Therefor." The bill aims to establish such centers nationwide for public school divisions serving children and youth with special needs while also satisfying the government's obligations under RA No. 7277, as amended, and the aforementioned constitutional guarantee. The bill recognizes that CYSNs have distinct needs. Thus, it offers learning methodologies and programs that will help them reach their full potential, be properly educated, and be well-prepared for adulthood, community life, and the ability to fit into society.

In line with these legislative endeavors, Republic Act No. 11650 provides additional perspectives and considerations on Inclusive Education. Enacted on March 11, 2022, this legislation underscores the State's policy to protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, particularly recognizing, protecting, and promoting the rights of learners with disabilities, including those from diverse ethnic, religious, or linguistic backgrounds, or indigenous origins. The Act explicitly declares the imperative to make education compulsory and accessible to all learners, ensuring that no one is deprived of the right to access an inclusive, equitable, and quality education. However, with the number of initiatives mentioned, since then, public schools in the country have not truly implemented full inclusive education.

This issue, including the fact that several public schools do not provide special education programs, makes it difficult for children with special needs to exercise their right to receive basic education. According to the Department of Education and Senator Gatchalian's office (Dela Peña, 2023), only 648 of the 13,408 Philippine schools offering Special Education (SPED) programs are designated SPED centers. These include 471 elementary schools and 177 high schools. Alarming, 84 percent of municipalities in the Philippines lack SPED centers. Las Piñas City, a dynamic urban center in the Philippines, holds a unique position within the broader educational context of the country. The local DepEd Division plays a central role in shaping students' educational experiences in the region. As inclusive education strives to ensure that every student, regardless of their background or abilities, has equal access to quality education, it becomes crucial to investigate the impediments hindering its successful implementation in Las Piñas City. Factors such as infrastructure limitations, teachers' attitudes, awareness levels, and policy alignment need thorough exploration to comprehend the intricate dynamics influencing the inclusive education landscape within the city.

Furthermore, understanding these challenges is essential for creating targeted interventions, policies, and practices that foster a truly inclusive educational environment. As the global community continues to emphasize inclusive education, this study will contribute to the broader discourse by shedding light on the specific challenges faced in the Philippines. The research problem addressed in this proposed research is the identification and analysis of the challenges that impede the successful implementation of inclusive education in the public schools within the DepEd Division of Las Piñas City. Despite the global commitment to inclusive education, there is a noticeable gap between policy intentions and on-the-ground realities. This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining the factors hindering the achievement of inclusive education goals at the local level.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The research method employed in this study is a quantitative approach aimed at systematically examining the implementation and challenges of inclusive education in public schools within the DepEd Division of Las Piñas City. A structured questionnaire was developed to collect quantitative data from teachers in these schools. The questionnaire comprised sections addressing demographic information, the level of implementation of inclusive education, and the extent of challenges faced in its implementation. A random sampling technique was used to ensure representation across different school levels and demographics. Data was collected through both online and paper-based surveys, with clear instructions provided to participants to ensure consistency and accuracy of responses. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the demographic profile of respondents. In contrast, inferential statistics such as t-tests, ANOVA, and correlation analysis were employed to examine potential differences in perceptions based on demographic variables and explore relationships between variables. Ethical considerations were carefully addressed, including obtaining informed consent and ensuring the confidentiality of future participant responses. By employing this quantitative research method, the study aims to provide valuable insights into the implementation and challenges of inclusive education in the specified context, ultimately contributing to enhancing inclusive education practices within the DepEd Division of Las Piñas City.

2.2 Research Locale

This study was conducted in two public elementary schools within the DepEd Division of Las Piñas City, specifically CAA Elementary School and Las Piñas Central Elementary School. These schools are located in District 1 and District 2 of Las Piñas City. The total population of elementary school teachers in the research locale consists of 83 teachers from Las Piñas Central Elementary School and 327 teachers from CAA Elementary School, totaling 410 teachers. These schools were selected due to their prominence and representative nature within the DepEd Division of Las Piñas City, making them ideal sites for examining the implementation of inclusive education practices among elementary school teachers.

2.3 Research Participants

A simple random sampling technique was employed to obtain a representative sample from the target population of public elementary school teachers within District 1 (CAA Elementary School) and District 2 (Las Piñas Central Elementary School) of the DepEd Division of Las Piñas City. This method ensures that each teacher has an equal chance of being included in the sample. A total sample size of 251 teachers was randomly selected from the population of teachers in the two schools. This involved assigning a unique identifier to each teacher and using a random number generator to select the required participants.

To facilitate the data collection process, permission was sought from the division office to conduct the study in both schools and divisions. Once permission is obtained, visits will be made to CAA Elementary School and Las Piñas Central Elementary School to request teachers to participate in the survey until the required number of responses is gathered. Both online and paper-based survey methods were utilized to accommodate participants' preferences. Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the sampling process to protect the rights and confidentiality of participants, including obtaining informed consent and safeguarding privacy and anonymity.

2.4 Research Instrument

The research instrument utilized in this study is a structured questionnaire designed to gather quantitative data from elementary teachers in public schools within Districts 1 and 2 of the DepEd Division of Las Piñas City. The questionnaire is carefully crafted to address the specific research objectives and questions outlined in the study. It consists of multiple sections covering various aspects of inclusive education implementation and challenges. The questionnaire begins with a section on demographic information, including age, sex, highest educational attainment, and years in teaching. This section aims to provide a comprehensive profile of the respondents, enabling the researchers to analyze the data about these demographic variables.

Following the demographic section is the questionnaire for assessing the level of implementation of inclusive education in terms of physical infrastructure, educators' attitudes, awareness levels, and discriminatory policies. The questionnaire is structured using a 4-point Likert scale items with the following range and description: 3.26-

4.00 - Very High, 2.51-3.25 - High, 1.76-2.50 - Low, and 1.00-1.75 - Very Low. The respondents are asked to put a checkmark on the appropriate designated column corresponding to their answer. "Very High" signifies exemplary implementation of inclusive education across various aspects such as physical infrastructure, attitudes of teachers, awareness levels, and discriminatory policies. This level indicates robust systems, significant resources, and widespread positive attitudes or practices. "High" denotes a strong performance with minor areas for improvement, including good infrastructure, positive teacher attitudes, high awareness levels, and minimal discriminatory policies. "Low" suggests efforts towards inclusive education but with significant gaps or shortcomings such as insufficient infrastructure, mixed teacher attitudes, moderate awareness levels, and some discriminatory policies. "Very Low" indicates minimal effort in incorporating inclusive education principles, characterized by inadequate infrastructure, negative teacher attitudes, low awareness levels, and prevalent discriminatory policies hindering inclusive practices.

The third and last section of the instrument is the questionnaire for assessing the extent of challenges teachers face in inclusive education. The questionnaire is similarly structured using a 4-point Likert scale items with the following range and description: 3.26-4.00 - Great Extent, 2.51-3.25 - Moderate Extent, 1.76-2.50 - Low Extent, and 1.00-1.75 - Very Low Extent, allowing respondents to rate the extent with statements related to physical infrastructure, attitudes of teachers, awareness levels, and discriminatory policies. "Very Great Extent" reflects pervasive challenges significantly impeding successful implementation. Major obstacles across various aspects require urgent attention and intervention. "Great Extent" indicates substantial challenges, though not as pervasive as at the "great extent" level. Significant hurdles exist, but they can be addressed effectively with concerted efforts and resources. "Moderate Extent" signifies manageable challenges that do not pose significant barriers to implementation. While difficulties may exist, they can be addressed through targeted strategies and interventions. Lastly, "Less Extent" denotes minimal challenges with little impact on implementation. Although some minor issues may be present, they do not hinder overall progress significantly.

The questionnaire was pre-tested with a small sample of elementary teachers to ensure clarity, comprehensibility, and reliability. Based on the feedback received during the pre-testing phase, any necessary revisions were made to enhance the validity and reliability of the instrument. Overall, the structured questionnaire serves as a systematic and standardized tool for collecting quantitative data from elementary teachers, enabling the researchers to analyze perceptions, identify trends, and draw meaningful conclusions regarding the implementation and challenges of inclusive education within the specified context.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

The data-gathering procedure for this study involves a systematic approach to collecting relevant information from all elementary teachers in public schools within Districts 1 and 2 of the DepEd Division of Las Piñas City. Teachers were recruited through school administrators or direct contact after preparing and planning the study, including designing the data collection instrument. Before participation, teachers were provided with informed consent, ensuring their understanding of the research objectives and their voluntary participation. The structured questionnaire was then administered either in person or electronically, with clear instructions provided to participants. Completed questionnaires were securely managed to protect confidentiality, and data analysis was conducted using appropriate statistical techniques. The findings were summarized in a comprehensive report and disseminated through academic publications and presentations to contribute to understanding inclusive education implementation and challenges in Las Piñas City.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

This research study followed ethical guidelines. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study if they experienced discomfort or distress. The study was designed to minimize potential risks, ensuring that participants were protected from physical, social, psychological, and other harm. The dignity and well-being of the participating elementary school teachers were prioritized throughout the research process.

To maintain the confidentiality of the data, all information provided by respondents was securely stored and anonymized. Their rights were rigorously protected, contributing to the preservation of the study's scientific and academic integrity. Additionally, to uphold the highest ethical standards, all results were communicated accurately and transparently, ensuring the research was free from plagiarism or any misconduct.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Demographic Profile

Based on Table 1, the majority of the respondents in the study are aged between 26-35 years, comprising 34.7% of the total sample. This is followed by teachers aged 36-45, who account for 29.9%. Those aged 46-55 represent 16.3% of the respondents, while the youngest group, aged 25 years or younger, makes up 12.7%. The smallest group is those aged 56 years and above, constituting 6.4% of the respondents. This distribution indicates a predominantly young to middle-aged teaching workforce in the public elementary schools within the division.

Table 1. Demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
≤25	32	12.7
26-35	87	34.7
36-45	75	29.9
46-55	41	16.3
≥56	16	6.4

The age distribution of the respondents suggests that younger and mid-career teachers are more prevalent in the teaching workforce in Las Piñas City. This demographic trend is significant in implementing inclusive education, as younger teachers might be more recently trained and, thus, potentially more familiar with contemporary inclusive education practices. Sanahuja et al. (2020) highlight that younger teachers are often more open to adopting innovative and democratic practices in the classroom, which can be crucial for the successful implementation of inclusive education. Conversely, the relatively smaller proportion of teachers aged 56 and above might indicate challenges sustaining experienced mentorship within schools. The diversity in age also suggests varying levels of experience and adaptability among teachers, which could influence the consistency and effectiveness of inclusive education practices across different classrooms. This aligns with the findings of Sanahuja et al. (2020), who noted that teachers' demographic characteristics, including age, play a critical role in shaping their attitudes towards and executing inclusive education.

Table 2 reveals a significant gender disparity in the demographic profile of the study's respondents. The data indicates that 74.1% of the respondents are female, while only 25.9% are male. This suggests that the teaching workforce in the public elementary schools in Las Piñas City is predominantly female. The high percentage of female teachers may reflect broader trends within the education sector, where women typically represent a larger proportion of the teaching population, particularly at the elementary level.

Table 2. Demographic profile of the respondents in terms of sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	65	25.9
Female	186	74.1

The predominance of female teachers in the study aligns with existing literature that highlights the gender imbalance within the teaching profession. Zakiah et al. (2021) observe that female teachers often dominate the elementary education sector, a trend seen in various educational systems worldwide. This gender distribution can influence the implementation and challenges of inclusive education, as female teachers may bring different perspectives and approaches to inclusive practices compared to their male counterparts. Additionally, the over-representation of female teachers can impact school dynamics, potentially affecting collaboration and support mechanisms. The findings of Zakiah et al. (2021) corroborate the idea that the success of inclusive education policies often hinges on the attitudes and experiences of the teaching staff, which are shaped by demographic factors such as sex. Understanding this demographic context is crucial for designing professional development programs and support systems that address male and female teachers' specific needs and strengths in promoting inclusive education.

Based on Table 3, the majority of the respondents in the study hold a Bachelor's degree, representing 68.9% of the total sample. Teachers with a Master's degree comprise 31.1%, while no respondents have attained a Doctoral degree. This indicates that while a significant portion of the teaching workforce has pursued graduate-level education, there is a complete absence of doctoral-level qualifications among the respondents. The data suggests that most teachers are equipped with at least a basic level of higher education, with a notable proportion engaging in further studies to enhance their professional qualifications.

Table 3. *Demographic profile of the respondents in terms of highest educational attainment*

Highest Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelor's Degree	173	68.9
Masteral Degree	78	31.1
Doctoral Degree	0	0

Teachers' educational attainment plays a crucial role in implementing inclusive education. According to Makuya and Sedibe (2021), higher educational qualifications often correlate with a greater understanding and more effective implementation of inclusive education practices. The finding that many teachers in Las Piñas City hold Master's degrees is encouraging, as advanced education can provide teachers with deeper insights into inclusive strategies and pedagogies. However, the absence of doctoral qualifications may highlight a potential gap in the teaching workforce's highest level of expertise and research-based knowledge. Makuya and Sedibe (2021) emphasize that continuous professional development and higher educational attainment are essential in overcoming challenges related to inclusive education. Therefore, while the current educational profile of the teachers is promising, there is room for growth in fostering a culture of lifelong learning and encouraging further academic advancement to support the effective implementation of inclusive education policies.

Based on Table 4, the demographic profile of the respondents in the study reveals a diverse range of teaching experiences among the respondents. The largest group, representing 33.5%, has taught for 6-10 years. This is followed by those with 5 years or less of teaching experience, comprising 26.3% of the respondents. Teachers with 11-15 years of experience account for 21.4%, while those with 16-20 years and more than 20 years of teaching experience represent 10.0% and 8.8%, respectively. This distribution indicates a significant presence of relatively early-career to mid-career teachers, with fewer respondents having long-term teaching experience.

Table 4. *Demographic profile of the respondents in terms of years in teaching*

Years in Teaching	Frequency	Percentage
≤5	66	26.3
6-10	84	33.5
11-15	54	21.4
16-20	25	10.0
≥20	22	8.8

The variety of teaching experiences among respondents can significantly impact the implementation of inclusive education. Sydoriv (2022) highlights that teachers' years of experience play a critical role in their ability to create and sustain an inclusive learning environment. Teachers with 6-10 years of experience, who form the largest group in this study, are often in a crucial phase of their careers where they have gained substantial practical knowledge and are still receptive to new educational strategies. The relatively high percentage of early-career teachers (26.3%) suggests a fresh infusion of new teaching approaches and a potential openness to innovative, inclusive education practices. However, the smaller percentages of those with over 20 years of experience might indicate challenges related to retaining veteran teachers with deep institutional knowledge and experience. Sydoriv (2022) also notes that ongoing professional development is essential for teachers at all stages of their careers to implement inclusive education effectively. This study's findings underscore the need for tailored professional development programs that cater to the varying levels of teaching experience to enhance the overall implementation of inclusive education in public elementary schools.

3.2 Level of Implementation of Inclusive Education

In terms of Physical Infrastructure

Based on Table 5, the level of implementation of inclusive education in the public schools of Las Piñas City, in terms of physical infrastructure, is rated consistently high across all indicators. The accessibility of physical infrastructure for students with disabilities is rated with a weighted mean of 2.98, which falls within the "High" verbal description category. Similarly, the adequacy of current facilities for diverse learners is also rated at 2.98. The effectiveness of the physical layout of classrooms and facilities in supporting the integration of students with special needs is rated identically at 2.98. The equipment of schools with assistive technologies and resources to support inclusive education has a slightly lower weighted mean of 2.94 but still falls within the "High" category. The extent to which modifications are made to the physical environment to accommodate diverse learning needs is rated the highest at 3.06. The overall weighted mean of these indicators is 2.99, indicating a generally high level of implementation regarding the physical infrastructure for inclusive education.

Table 5. *Level of implementation of inclusive education in terms of physical infrastructure*

Indicators	Mean	Description
How would you rate the accessibility of physical infrastructure in your school for students with disabilities?	2.98	High
To what extent do you believe that the current facilities in your school cater adequately to the needs of diverse learners?	2.98	High
How effectively do you think the physical layout of classrooms and facilities supports integrating students with special needs?	2.98	High
In your opinion, how well-equipped is your school with assistive technologies and resources to support inclusive education?	2.94	High
To what extent are modifications made to the physical environment to accommodate diverse learning needs?	3.06	High
Overall Weighted Mean	2.99	High

Legend: 3.26 – 4.00 (Very High), 2.51 – 3.25 (High), 1.76 – 2.50 (Low), 1.00 – 1.75 (Very Low)

The high ratings for the level of implementation of inclusive education in terms of physical infrastructure align with findings from existing literature. Jannah and Hermanto (2022) emphasize that adequate physical infrastructure is crucial for effective inclusive education, particularly during challenging times like the COVID-19 pandemic. Their study highlights that schools with well-designed physical environments are better equipped to meet the diverse needs of students, thereby fostering an inclusive learning atmosphere. Similarly, Putri and Ain (2022) underscore the importance of teacher readiness and the availability of necessary resources, including physical infrastructure, to support inclusive education. The high ratings in the current study suggest that public elementary schools in Las Piñas City are making significant efforts to ensure their physical environments are conducive to inclusive education. These efforts likely contribute to the overall effectiveness of inclusive practices by providing accessible and supportive facilities for all students. The findings highlight the importance of continuous investment in physical infrastructure to maintain and further enhance the implementation of inclusive education practices.

In terms of Attitudes of Teachers

Based on Table 6, the level of implementation of inclusive education in the public schools of Las Piñas City, in terms of teachers' attitudes, is rated very high across all indicators. Educators' overall acceptance and openness towards inclusive education principles are rated with a weighted mean of 3.38, indicating a very high level of acceptance. Educators' empathy and understanding towards students with diverse learning needs have an even higher rating of 3.42. The effectiveness of educators' collaboration and knowledge-sharing to support the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms is also rated very high, with a weighted mean of 3.37. Similarly, educators' training in handling the diverse needs of students in inclusive settings has a rating of 3.26. Finally, the perception of a culture of inclusivity and respect for diversity among educators is rated with a weighted mean of 3.37. The overall weighted mean for these indicators is 3.36, reflecting a high level of positive attitudes towards inclusive education among teachers.

Table 6. *Level of implementation of inclusive education in terms of attitudes of teachers*

Indicators	Mean	Description
How would you rate educators' overall acceptance and openness towards inclusive education principles in your school?	3.38	Very High
To what extent do you believe educators demonstrate empathy and understanding towards students with diverse learning needs?	3.42	Very High
How effectively do educators collaborate and share knowledge to support the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms?	3.37	Very High
In your opinion, how well-trained are educators in handling the diverse needs of students in inclusive settings?	3.26	Very High
To what extent do you perceive a culture of inclusivity and respect for diversity among the educators in your school?	3.37	Very High
Overall Weighted Mean	3.36	Very High

The very high ratings for teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education reflect a strong foundation for the successful implementation of inclusive practices in Las Piñas City public schools. Adu (2021) emphasizes that teachers' positive attitudes are crucial for the effective implementation of inclusive education, as they directly influence the classroom environment and the success of inclusive strategies. The findings indicate that teachers in Las Piñas City are highly accepting, empathetic, and collaborative, which are essential qualities for fostering an inclusive educational setting. Anshory and Amelia (2020) also highlight the importance of teacher attitudes, noting that educators' supportive and understanding approach significantly enhances the learning experiences of students with diverse needs. The high ratings in this study suggest that teachers are not only open to inclusive education principles but are also well-trained and proactive in creating a culture of inclusivity and respect for diversity. These positive attitudes are likely to mitigate some of the challenges associated with inclusive education, as supportive and collaborative teachers can better address the needs of all students, ensuring a more effective and inclusive educational experience.

In terms of Awareness Levels

Based on Table 7, the level of implementation of inclusive education in the public schools of Las Piñas City, in terms of awareness levels, is predominantly rated very high across most indicators. The awareness of educators regarding the principles and objectives of inclusive education has the highest weighted mean of 3.42, indicating a very high level of awareness. Educators' understanding of inclusive education practices' legal and ethical implications also falls within the very high category, with a mean of 3.27. The level of being well-informed about the various learning needs and disabilities of students is rated with a mean of 3.36, again reflecting a very high level of awareness. Awareness programs and training sessions promoting inclusive education within schools are rated slightly lower, with a mean of 3.19, which is still considered high. Similarly, the extent to which educators are encouraged to engage in continuous learning and development related to inclusive education has a mean of 3.25, categorized as high. The overall weighted mean of 3.30 signifies a very high level of awareness among educators regarding inclusive education.

Table 7. *Level of implementation of inclusive education in terms of awareness levels*

Indicators	Mean	Description
How aware are educators of the principles and objectives of inclusive education?	3.42	Very High
To what extent do educators understand inclusive education practices' legal and ethical implications?	3.27	Very High
How well-informed are educators about the various learning needs and disabilities of students in their classrooms?	3.36	Very High
How effectively are awareness programs and training sessions conducted to promote inclusive education within your school?	3.19	High
To what extent are educators encouraged to engage in continuous learning and development related to inclusive education?	3.25	High
Overall Weighted Mean	3.30	Very High

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In terms of Discriminatory Policies

Based on Table 8, implementing inclusive education in the public schools of Las Piñas City regarding discriminatory policies reveals a generally very high level of effectiveness in addressing and preventing discrimination. The perception of the prevalence of discriminatory practices or policies against students with disabilities within schools has a weighted mean of 3.08, categorized as high. This indicates that while discriminatory practices are perceived to exist, they are not overwhelmingly prevalent. The extent to which existing school policies support or hinder the inclusion of students with diverse learning needs is rated very high, with a weighted mean of 3.35. Similarly, the effectiveness of enforcing anti-discrimination policies within the school environment is also rated very high, with a mean of 3.30. The responsiveness of school administration in addressing complaints or issues related to discrimination against students with disabilities is rated very high as well, with a mean of 3.29. Lastly, aligning school policies and regulations with national or international standards for inclusive education is rated very high, with a mean of 3.31. The overall weighted mean of 3.27 reflects a very high level of implementation regarding handling discriminatory policies in these schools.

Table 8. *Level of implementation of inclusive education in terms of discriminatory policies*

Indicators	Mean	Description
How prevalent do you perceive discriminatory practices or policies against students with disabilities within your school?	3.08	High
To what extent do existing school policies support or hinder the inclusion of students with diverse learning needs?	3.35	Very High
How effectively are anti-discrimination policies enforced within your school environment?	3.30	Very High
In your opinion, how responsive is the school administration in addressing complaints or issues related to discrimination against students with disabilities?	3.29	Very High
To what extent are policies and regulations aligned with national or international standards for inclusive education?	3.31	Very High
Overall Weighted Mean	3.27	Very High

The findings from the study align with existing literature that emphasizes the importance of robust policies and administrative responsiveness in promoting inclusive education. Koliqi and Zabeli (2021) identify the critical role of non-discriminatory policies in shaping teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, suggesting that supportive policies significantly enhance the inclusivity of educational environments. This study's very high ratings for policy support, enforcement, and administrative responsiveness suggest that Las Piñas City public schools have established a strong framework to combat discrimination and support diverse learning needs. Annah et al. (2023) further corroborate these findings by highlighting that the successful implementation of inclusive education relies heavily on the effectiveness of anti-discrimination policies and the proactive measures taken by school administrations. The perception of a high prevalence of supportive policies and their enforcement indicates a commitment to aligning school practices with both national and international standards for inclusive education, which is crucial for fostering an inclusive school culture. The overall very high level of implementation suggests that while there is room for improvement in eliminating discriminatory practices, significant strides have been made in creating a more inclusive and equitable educational environment in Las Piñas City.

3.3 Challenges of Inclusive Education in the Public Schools

In terms of Physical Infrastructure

Based on Table 9, the extent of challenges related to physical infrastructure in promoting inclusive education in the public schools of Las Piñas City is perceived to be very significant. The lack of accessible infrastructure and inadequate resources are rated with a weighted mean of 3.27, indicating that these issues present a great challenge. The difficulty in modifying existing physical structures to accommodate diverse learning needs is rated slightly higher at 3.31. The condition of physical infrastructure and its impact on the learning experiences of students with disabilities is seen as a significant challenge, with a rating of 3.36. Additionally, the lack of funding affecting the

improvement of physical infrastructure is rated at 3.32, suggesting that financial constraints are a substantial barrier. The overall weighted mean of 3.31 reflects that the challenges related to physical infrastructure are perceived to a very great extent by the teachers in these schools.

Table 9. *Extent of challenges of inclusive education in terms of physical infrastructure*

Indicators	Mean	Description
How greatly do you perceive the lack of accessible infrastructure to be a challenge in promoting inclusive education in your school?	3.27	Very Great Extent
To what extent do inadequate resources hinder the effective implementation of inclusive education practices in your school?	3.27	Very Great Extent
How challenging is modifying existing physical structures to accommodate diverse learning needs?	3.31	Very Great Extent
In your opinion, how significantly does the condition of physical infrastructure impact the learning experiences of students with disabilities?	3.36	Very Great Extent
To what extent does the lack of funding affect the improvement of physical infrastructure to support inclusive education?	3.32	Very Great Extent
Overall Weighted Mean	3.31	Very Great Extent

The findings from this study are corroborated by existing literature, which underscores the importance of physical infrastructure in the successful implementation of inclusive education. Andrews et al. (2019) highlight that inadequate physical infrastructure is a major constraint in promoting inclusive teaching practices. They emphasize that without accessible and adequately resourced physical environments, implementing inclusive education becomes significantly more challenging. Johnson (2023) also notes that the lack of supportive physical infrastructure often hinders teachers' self-efficacy in implementing inclusive practices. The perception of these challenges to a very great extent in Las Piñas City suggests that addressing physical infrastructure deficits is critical for improving inclusive education. The high ratings for challenges related to funding and modifications to existing structures further align with the findings of Andrews et al. (2019), who argue that financial constraints and the inability to adapt current facilities are persistent barriers in many educational settings. These studies collectively emphasize the need for substantial investment and strategic planning to overcome the physical infrastructure challenges, ensuring that all students, regardless of their abilities, have access to a conducive learning environment.

In terms of Attitudes of Teachers

Based on Table 10, the extent of challenges related to teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in the public schools of Las Piñas City is significant. Resistance or negative attitudes among educators towards inclusive education practices are perceived as a challenge to a great extent, with a weighted mean of 3.23. Biases and stereotypes among educators, which hinder the successful inclusion of students with disabilities, are rated at a very great extent, with a mean of 3.27. Fostering a supportive and inclusive culture among educators is perceived as challenging to a great extent, with a mean of 3.09.

Table 10. *The extent of challenges of inclusive education in terms of the attitudes of teachers*

Indicators	Mean	Description
How greatly do you perceive resistance or negative attitudes among educators towards inclusive education practices to be challenging?	3.23	Great Extent
To what extent do biases and stereotypes among educators hinder the successful inclusion of students with disabilities?	3.27	Very Great Extent
How challenging is it to foster a supportive and inclusive culture among educators in your school?	3.09	Great Extent
In your opinion, how significantly do inadequate training and professional development opportunities contribute to challenges in implementing inclusive education?	3.25	Great Extent
How much do workload and time constraints impact educators' ability to support diverse learners in inclusive classrooms effectively?	3.38	Very Great Extent
Overall Weighted Mean	3.25	Great Extent

Inadequate training and professional development opportunities contributing to challenges in implementing inclusive education are rated greatly, with a mean of 3.25. The impact of workload and time constraints on educators' ability to effectively support diverse learners is perceived to a great extent, with a mean of 3.38. The overall weighted mean of 3.25 indicates that the challenges related to the attitudes of teachers are perceived to a great extent.

The findings of this study align with existing literature on the challenges of inclusive education related to teachers' attitudes. Calderón-Almendros et al. (2020) highlight that resistance and negative attitudes among educators are significant barriers to implementing inclusive practices. The high ratings for biases and stereotypes reflect the findings of Arnaiz Sánchez, De Haro-Rodríguez, and Maldonado Martínez (2019), who emphasize that entrenched biases can severely hinder the inclusion of students with disabilities. The perception that fostering a supportive and inclusive culture among educators is challenging aligns with the broader challenges identified in creating inclusive educational environments. Furthermore, the significance of inadequate training and professional development opportunities as a challenge supports the findings of Arnaiz Sánchez et al. (2019), who stress the need for continuous professional development to equip teachers with the skills necessary for inclusive education. The high rating for the impact of workload and time constraints underscores the practical difficulties teachers face, as highlighted by Calderón-Almendros et al. (2020), who note that additional responsibilities without adequate support can impede teachers' ability to implement inclusive practices effectively. Overall, these findings suggest that addressing teachers' attitudes through comprehensive training and support systems is crucial for overcoming the challenges of inclusive education in Las Piñas City.

In terms of Awareness Levels

Based on Table 11, the extent of challenges related to awareness levels in promoting inclusive education in the public schools of Las Piñas City is notably significant. The lack of awareness about inclusive education principles and practices among educators is a challenge to a great extent, with a weighted mean of 3.27. Similarly, the challenge of disseminating information and raising awareness about inclusive education within the school community is also rated at 3.27, indicating great difficulty. The limited understanding of the diverse needs of students is perceived to hinder the successful implementation of inclusive education to a great extent, with a mean of 3.25. The impact of the lack of support from stakeholders on promoting inclusive education is rated very high, with a mean of 3.28. Lastly, cultural or societal beliefs about disability creating challenges in implementing inclusive education practices are rated very high, with a mean of 3.26. The overall weighted mean of 3.27 indicates that the challenges related to awareness levels are perceived to a very great extent by the teachers in these schools.

Table 11. *The extent of challenges of inclusive education in terms of awareness levels*

Indicators	Mean	Description
How greatly do you perceive the lack of awareness about inclusive education principles and practices among educators to be challenging?	3.27	Very Great Extent
To what extent does the limited understanding of the diverse needs of students hinder the successful implementation of inclusive education?	3.25	Great Extent
How challenging is it to disseminate information and raise awareness about inclusive education within the school community?	3.27	Very Great Extent
In your opinion, how significantly does the lack of support from stakeholders impact efforts to promote inclusive education?	3.28	Very Great Extent
To what extent do cultural or societal beliefs about disability challenge implementing inclusive education practices?	3.26	Very Great Extent
Overall Weighted Mean	3.27	Very Great Extent

The findings align with existing literature that emphasizes the critical role of awareness and understanding in successfully implementing inclusive education. Ediyanto et al. (2023) highlight that a significant barrier to inclusive education is the lack of awareness and understanding among educators regarding inclusive practices and the diverse needs of students. This is consistent with the high ratings for the challenges related to the lack of awareness and dissemination of information in this study. Additionally, Lakkala et al. (2019) identify that limited stakeholder support and prevailing cultural beliefs about disability can significantly impede the promotion of inclusive education. The high ratings for the lack of stakeholder support and cultural challenges reflect these

findings, suggesting that comprehensive awareness programs and stakeholder engagement are essential for overcoming these barriers. To a great extent, the overall perception of these challenges indicates that addressing awareness and understanding is crucial for improving inclusive education in Las Piñas City. Ensuring that educators are well-informed and supported by stakeholders can enhance the implementation of inclusive practices, as supported by both Ediyanto et al. (2023) and Lakkala et al. (2019).

In terms of Discriminatory Policies

Based on Table 12, the extent of challenges related to discriminatory policies in the public schools of Las Piñas City significantly affects the implementation of inclusive education. The perception of discriminatory policies or practices posing a challenge to successful inclusive education is rated with a weighted mean of 3.27, indicating a great extent. Existing policies creating barriers to the inclusion of students with disabilities have a weighted mean of 3.08, reflecting a great extent of challenge. Addressing and overcoming discriminatory attitudes and behaviors within the school environment is also seen as challenging to a great extent, with a mean of 3.25. Inconsistencies or gaps in policy implementation affecting the inclusivity of educational practices are rated with a mean of 3.26, indicating a great extent of challenge. The lack of legal frameworks or enforcement mechanisms contributing to challenges in promoting inclusive education is perceived as a great challenge, with a mean of 3.28. The weighted mean of 3.23 suggests that discriminatory policies pose a great challenge to inclusive education in these schools.

Table 12. *The extent of challenges of inclusive education in terms of discriminatory policies*

Indicators	Mean	Description
How greatly do discriminatory policies or practices challenge the successful implementation of inclusive education in your school?	3.27	Very Great Extent
To what extent do existing policies create barriers to including students with disabilities?	3.08	Great Extent
How challenging is addressing and overcoming discriminatory attitudes and behaviors within the school environment?	3.25	Great Extent
How significantly do inconsistencies or gaps in policy implementation affect the inclusivity of educational practices?	3.26	Very Great Extent
To what extent does the lack of legal frameworks or enforcement mechanisms contribute to challenges in promoting inclusive education?	3.28	Very Great Extent
Overall Weighted Mean	3.23	Great Extent

The findings from this study are consistent with existing literature on the challenges of implementing inclusive education due to discriminatory policies. Asfaruddin et al. (2021) highlight that discriminatory practices and policies are significant obstacles to the effective implementation of inclusive education. Their research indicates that these barriers often stem from deeply ingrained attitudes and insufficient legal frameworks, which align with the high ratings for the challenges posed by discriminatory policies and the lack of enforcement mechanisms in this study. Valdivieso (2020) further supports these findings by emphasizing the critical role of school leadership in addressing discriminatory attitudes and ensuring consistent policy implementation. The perception of inconsistencies or gaps in policy implementation as a significant challenge reflects the need for strong, clear guidelines to support inclusive practices. Valdivieso (2020) also points out that effective inclusive education requires comprehensive legal and policy frameworks that are consistently enforced. The high ratings for the challenges related to legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms underscore the importance of systemic support in promoting inclusive education. The study's findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to address discriminatory policies and behaviors, ensure consistent policy implementation, and strengthen legal frameworks to support inclusive education in Las Piñas City.

3.4 Difference in the Level of Implementation of Inclusive Education when Grouped According to Profile

Based on Table 13, the analysis of the significant difference in the level of implementation of inclusive education among public elementary teachers in the Division of Las Piñas City, when grouped according to profile, reveals varying results. The computed F value for age is 2.78, which exceeds the critical F value of 2.41, with a p-value of 0.03. This indicates a significant difference in the level of implementation of inclusive education when grouped according to age, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. In contrast, the computed T values for sex, highest educational attainment, and years in teaching are -1.63, -1.24, and 1.89, respectively, all of which are less than their corresponding critical T values of 1.98 and 2.41. The p-values for these variables are 0.11 for sex, 0.27 for highest

educational attainment, and 0.11 for years in teaching, indicating that these differences are not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted for sex, highest educational attainment, and years in teaching, suggesting no significant difference in the level of implementation of inclusive education based on these profiles.

Table 13. *Significant difference in the level of implementation of inclusive education when grouped according to profile*

Profile	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Age	0.03	Reject H ₀	Significant
Sex	0.11	Accept H ₀	Not Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	0.27	Accept H ₀	Not Significant
Years in teaching	0.11	Accept H ₀	Not Significant

The significant difference in the level of implementation of inclusive education based on age aligns with existing literature that highlights how age can influence teachers' attitudes and approaches towards inclusive practices. Due to recent training and exposure to contemporary educational practices, Bradshaw and Rose (2021) suggest that younger teachers may be more adaptable and open to inclusive education strategies. This might explain the significant differences observed in this study. On the other hand, the findings that sex, highest educational attainment, and years in teaching do not significantly affect the level of implementation of inclusive education are corroborated by the same study, which emphasizes the importance of ongoing support and professional development for all teachers, regardless of their demographic profiles. Bradshaw and Rose (2021) recommend comprehensive support systems to help teachers implement inclusive education effectively, highlighting that professional growth and implementation success are not solely dependent on demographic factors but on continuous professional development and institutional support. These findings underscore the importance of providing targeted support and training to teachers across all demographic groups to enhance the overall implementation of inclusive education in public schools.

Based on Table 14, the analysis of the significant difference in the extent of challenges of inclusive education among public elementary teachers in the Division of Las Piñas City, when grouped according to profile, shows varied results. For the profile variable of age, the computed F value is 1.73, which is less than the critical F value of 2.41, with a p-value of 0.14. This indicates no significant difference in the extent of challenges based on age, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. Similarly, for sex, the computed T value is -0.20, which is less than the critical T value of 1.98, with a p-value of 0.84. For highest educational attainment, the computed T value is -0.17, which is less than the critical T value of 1.97, with a p-value of 0.86. These findings suggest no significant differences in the extent of challenges based on sex and highest educational attainment, resulting in the acceptance of the null hypothesis for these variables. In contrast, the computed F value for years in teaching is 3.74, which exceeds the critical F value of 2.41, with a p-value of 0.01. This indicates a significant difference in the extent of challenges based on years in teaching, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis for this profile variable.

Table 14. *Significant difference in the extent of challenges of inclusive education when grouped according to profile*

Profile	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Age	0.14	Accept H ₀	Not Significant
Sex	0.84	Accept H ₀	Not Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	0.86	Accept H ₀	Not Significant
Years in teaching	0.01	Reject H ₀	Significant

The finding that there is no significant difference in the extent of challenges based on age, sex, and highest educational attainment is consistent with some of the literature suggesting that inclusive education challenges are pervasive and not necessarily dependent on these demographic factors. Ferraioli and Harris (2019) discuss that inclusive education faces universal challenges, such as resource limitations and insufficient training, which can affect teachers regardless of age, sex, or educational background. This highlights the need for systemic solutions to address these challenges comprehensively. However, the significant difference in the extent of challenges based

on years in teaching aligns with literature indicating that experience can impact how teachers perceive and manage the challenges of inclusive education. Ferraioli and Harris (2019) note that more experienced teachers might have developed better strategies for handling inclusive education's complexities or may perceive challenges differently due to their long-term exposure to the educational environment. This suggests that teachers with varying years of experience may require different types of support and professional development to effectively address the challenges they face in implementing inclusive education. Overall, these findings emphasize the importance of tailoring support and interventions to the specific needs of teachers based on their years of experience to enhance the effectiveness of inclusive education practices in Las Piñas City.

Based on Table 15, the analysis shows a significant relationship between the level of implementation and the extent of challenges of inclusive education among public elementary teachers in the Division of Las Piñas City. The computed r value is 0.2538, which indicates a very low positive correlation between the level of implementation and the extent of challenges. Despite the low correlation, the p -value is 0.00, less than the alpha level of 0.05, suggesting that the relationship is statistically significant. This means that as the level of implementation of inclusive education increases, the extent of challenges experienced also slightly increases, albeit the correlation is weak.

Table 15. *Significant relationship between the level of implementation and the extent of challenges of inclusive education*

Level	Extent	r value	P value	Remarks	Decision
Implementation of inclusive education	Challenges of inclusive education	0.2538	0.00	Very Low Positive Correlation	Significant

The findings of this study are consistent with the literature, which suggests that the relationship between the implementation of inclusive education and the challenges faced is complex. Mertens et al. (2020) highlight that implementing inclusive education often brings to light various challenges previously unaddressed, such as the need for more resources, teacher training, and adjustments in teaching strategies. This might explain the positive correlation observed in this study, where improvements in implementation also reveal more areas that need attention and improvement. Waddington and Reed (2019) further support this notion by discussing how using digital technology in inclusive education, while beneficial, also introduces new challenges, such as the need for ongoing teacher training and access to appropriate technological resources. This dual effect of implementation - bringing both progress and new challenges - is reflected in the low positive correlation found in the study. Although the correlation is weak, the significance of the relationship indicates that comprehensive support systems should accompany efforts to implement inclusive education to address emerging challenges. This includes continuous professional development for teachers, adequate funding, and infrastructure improvements to ensure that inclusive education can be sustained and effective.

4.0 Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that most respondents are younger female teachers, predominantly holding a Bachelor's degree and possessing 6-10 years of teaching experience. The implementation of inclusive education is generally rated high, particularly in areas such as physical infrastructure, teachers' positive attitudes, high awareness levels, and strong policy support against discrimination. However, significant challenges remain, including inadequate physical infrastructure, resistance and biases among teachers, lack of awareness and stakeholder support, and issues with discriminatory policies. The level of implementation of inclusive education significantly varies with age but not with sex, educational attainment, or years in teaching. Additionally, while the extent of challenges does not significantly differ by age, sex, or educational attainment, more experienced teachers perceive greater challenges. There is a significant, though very low, positive correlation between the level of implementation and the extent of challenges of inclusive education. These findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge by highlighting the critical role of teacher demographics in implementing inclusive education and the persistent challenges that hinder its effectiveness. The study underscores the need for targeted interventions to address these challenges, particularly through the proposed IEEI program, which aims to improve teacher preparedness, upgrade physical infrastructure, and foster inclusivity through professional development and policy reforms. Future research could explore the effectiveness of the IEEI program in various educational

contexts, investigate additional factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education, and examine long-term outcomes for students and teachers involved in such initiatives.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

As the sole author of this research, The researcher was responsible for all aspects of the study, including conceptualization, data collection, analysis, writing, editing, and finalizing the manuscript.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this research.

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