**Lived Experiences of General Education Teachers Handling Learners with Difficulty in Basic Learning and Applying Knowledge**

**Abstract**

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| --- |
| **Aims:** This study explored the lived experiences of general education teachers in handling learners with difficulty in basic learning and applying knowledge, specifically examining how social support, coping skills, and flexibility contribute to teacher resilience in inclusive education settings.**Study Design:** A phenomenological qualitative study anchored on Rachmad's (2022) Educational Resilience Theory was employed to capture teachers' reflections, emotional responses, and coping strategies.**Methodology:** Nine general education teachers from Calinan District with at least one year of experience handling learners with learning difficulties were purposively selected. Data were collected through focus group discussions and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis approach. Trustworthiness was ensured through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability measures.**Results:** Four major themes emerged: (1) Social support encompassing peer support and professional consultation, consistent parent communication, and inclusive policies with teacher dedication; (2) Coping skills including emotional self-regulation and continuous learning; (3) Flexibility through differentiated instruction, use of instructional alternatives and manipulatives, and classroom management; and (4) Other factors comprising commitment to teaching role, patience, optimism, and positive framing. Teachers demonstrated resilience through collaborative networks, adaptive instructional strategies, and solution-focused thinking despite facing resource limitations and training gaps.**Conclusion:** The study confirms Rachmad's Educational Resilience Theory, revealing that teacher resilience in inclusive education is developed through interconnected social support systems, emotional regulation strategies, instructional flexibility, and personal commitment. These findings emphasize the need for comprehensive professional development programs and supportive institutional policies to foster sustainable teacher resilience in inclusive educational environments. |

*Keywords: Basic learning, Applying knowledge, Learning difficulties, Lived Experiences of General Education*

**1. Introduction**

**1.1 The Problem and Its Scope**

General education teachers face challenges implementing inclusive education. They lack professional training for students with disabilities, creating barriers (Jury et al., 2023; Starks & Reich, 2023; Crispel & Kasperski, 2021; Wang et al., 2023; Fernández-Batanero et al., 2022).

Teacher training is essential for inclusive education success. Holmqvist and Lelinge (2021) found professional development enhanced confidence. Arnaiz-Sánchez et al. (2023) revealed inadequate training in Spain, causing educator concerns about managing diverse student challenges.

Philippines' Department of Education promotes inclusive education through Special Education programs. However, General Edudcation teachers face resource limitations, training gaps, low parental involvement, and classroom congestion (Seliane & Kgothule, 2022; Reyes, 2023; Campado et al., 2023).

Calinan District has 132 English learners (grades 4-6) and 246 Filipino learners (grades 3-6) with reading difficulties. Philippine Informal Reading Inventory results show these non-readers need concentrated tutoring, challenging teachers lacking specialized training.

Observed challenges prompted reflection on teacher responsiveness to reading difficulties (Dell’Anna et al., 2021). Teachers recognize inclusive education's importance but lack resources, professional development, and emotional support. This research explores teacher resilience and identifies supporting factors.

**1.2 Significance of the Study**

 This phenomenological study explores general education teachers' experiences with struggling readers. It bridges gaps between teacher challenges and needed support, providing insights for training, professional development, and creating equitable inclusive learning environments.

**1.3. Statement of the Problem**

 This research aimed to explore the lived experiences of General Education teachers in handling learners with difficulty in basic learning and applying knowledge. Specifically, this research sought answers to the following questions: (1) What is the social support experienced by teachers that led them to develop resilience in handling learners with difficulty in basic learning and applying knowledge? (2) What are the coping skills experienced by teachers that led them to develop resilience in handling learners with difficulty in basic learning and applying knowledge? (3) What is the flexibility experienced by teachers that led them to develop resilience in handling learners with difficulty in basic learning and applying knowledge? (4) What are other factors that contribute to teachers' resilience apart from those mentioned that developed their resilience in teaching?

**1.4. Assumptions**

In this study, the following assumptions were upheld: (1) that resilience is influenced by social support, coping skills, and flexibility of a teacher, and (2) that other factors contribute to teacher's resilience.

**1.5. Theoretical Lens and Paradigm**

 This study was anchored on the Educational Resilience Theory of Yoesoep Edhie Rachmad (2022). His theory defines educational resilience as the ability of individuals and institutions to endure, adapt, and thrive despite facing difficulties and changes. Rachmad’s theory highlights three key elements: social support, coping skills, and flexibility in educational approaches, all of which resonate strongly with the lived experiences of teachers in mainstream classrooms. Figure 1 shows the theoretical paradigm of the study.



**Figure 1. Theoretical Paradigm of the Study**

**2. Method**

**2.1 Research Design**

This phenomenological study explores general education teachers lived experiences handling learners with basic learning difficulties. Using qualitative methodology, it captures teachers' reflections, emotional responses, and coping strategies through focus group discussions and reflective narratives.

**2.2 Locale of the Study**

This study was conducted in selected Calinan District in the 3rd Congressional with 17 elementary schools. Four were targeted for this research: Joaquin Elementary School, Wangan Elementary School, Tamayong Elementary School, and Pedro P. Rodriguez Elementary School. These schools were identified as having learners who have difficulty with basic learning and applying knowledge, specifically in reading.

**2.3 Sample and Sampling Techniques**

The participants of the study were the nine general education teachers from Calinan District who are handling learners with learning difficulties who have at least one year of experience. They were selected based on their background expertise and willingness to participate in the study through focus group discussion. Moreover, the researcher used purposive sampling, a qualitative data collection methodology that depends on the researcher’s judgment in selecting population members for participation in their study (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). The selection of suitable units (e.g., individuals, organizations, documents, departments, etc.) for sampling must align with the research questions and the study's design.

**2.4 Research Instrument**

Interview questions aligned with research objectives and Educational Resilience Theory elements (Rachmad). According to Dhir and Gupta (2007), research questions describe study purpose. Questions were validated by expert panels ensuring accuracy and relevance (Brown, 2021).

**2.5 Data Gathering Procedure**

Systematic data collection involved protocol review by SMILE, proposal defense, question validation by special education experts, institutional approvals, informed consent distribution, focus group scheduling, verbatim transcription, thematic analysis, and coding for accuracy and reliability.

**2.6 Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis examined teachers' experiences systematically. According to Squires (2023), it provides structured examination of subjective experiences. Following Braun and Clarke's six-step approach, it synthesizes qualitative data into coherent themes (Ahmed et al., 2025; Bryda & Sadowski, 2024).

**2.7 Trustworthiness of the Study**

This study ensured credibility by ensuring accurate data collection and transcription for precise participant representation (Adler, 2022; Dodgson, 2019; Gunawan, 2015). To uphold transferability, the study provided rich descriptions enabling application in different contexts, enhancing practical impact and relevance (Haq et al., 2023; Riazi et al., 2023; Ahmed, 2024). To ensure dependability, the study maintained data consistency across comparable contexts, supporting credibility by demonstrating study repeatability with similar outcomes (Haq et al., 2023; Eryilmaz, 2022; Amin et al., 2020). Finally, to uphold confirmability, the study established audit trail using coding system (FGP-T-participant number-line numbers) showing data accurately reflects participant responses rather than researcher bias (Rose & Johnson, 2020).

**3. Results and Discussion**

 The presentation of results is guided by the modified paradigm. Based on the modified paradigm of Rachmad’s Educational Resilience Theory, the resilience of general education teachers handling learners with difficulty in basic learning and applying knowledge is shaped by three key interconnected factors: social support, coping skills, and flexibility. Social support—encompassing peer support, consistent effort in parent communication, inclusive education policy, and teacher dedication—serves as a foundational pillar that nurtures a teacher’s emotional and professional stability. Alongside this, coping skills such as emotional regulation and continuous confidence-building through learning equip teachers with the psychological tools necessary to face daily classroom challenges.

Flexibility further reinforces resilience by promoting differentiated instruction and flexible teaching, the use of instructional alternatives and manipulatives, and classroom management. These elements allow teachers to adapt to the diverse and evolving needs of learners struggling with basic academic competencies. Together, these dimensions foster a resilient mindset characterized by teaching commitment to the teaching role, patience, optimism, and positive framing. This paradigm illustrates how resilience is not an inherent trait but a construct developed through supportive environments, adaptive capabilities, and strategic coping mechanisms. Figure 2 shows the modified paradigm of the study.



**Figure 2. Modified Paradigm of Lived Experiences of General Education Teachers Through the Lens of Educational Resilience Theory (Rachmad, 2022)**

 Table 1 shows the emerging themes and sub-themes based on the lived experiences of general education teachers handling learners with difficulty in basic learning and applying knowledge.

**Table 1. Emerging Themes on the Lived Experiences of General Education Teachers through the Lens of Educational Resilience Theory (Rachmad, 2022)**

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| --- | --- |
| **Discourse and Dimensions** | **Extracted Statements** |
| **Social Support a** |  |
| Peer Support and Professional Consultation | "I ask help from previous teachers." (FGD-T-Participant 3, L69)" I seek advice from other teachers who have handled them before on how to handle them and what strategies they have used that have been effective with the child. Of course, I will also watch YouTube because there are ideas on YouTube that can be applied to learners. Then we won't just be sending them stress, music. afternoon for headache relief." (FGD-T-Participant8-L65-69) |
| Consistent Effort in Parent Communication | "Yes, I give equal opportunities to parents by updating them on their academic and non-academic progress. I ensure open communication. However, I provide extra guidance to parents of learners with difficulties, helping them understand their child's needs." (FGD-T-Participant 6-L44-47)" Parents need more support… I didn't even try to say there was a problem." (FGD-T-Participant 1-L50-51) |
| Inclusive Policies and Teacher Dedication | "We will accept whoever enrolls, ma'am. We will not refuse." (FGD-T-Participant 5-L16-17)"Even if I am not fully prepared or have no formal training in special education, I still accept all enrollees because it is part of the department's mandate to implement inclusive education and ensure education for all." (FGD-T-Participant 9-Line 24-26) |
| **Coping Skills b** |  |
| Emotional Self-Regulation | "I have to move 10 steps backward before you say or do something" (FGD-T-Participant 1-L105)"I just paused and took a deep breath, and reminded myself that they need me. Sometimes, I just drink water to keep myself calm." (FGD-T-Participant 7-L43-44) |
| Continuous Learning | "The techniques from seminars and training are very useful as coping strategies." (FGD-T-Participant 6-L72-73)" We just attended a seminar, ma'am, because we can apply it, ma'am, because there are demonstrations and other strategies from the teacher, he is nice, he can be used to meet the needs of the student..." (FGD-T-Participant 2-L80-85) |
| **Flexibility c** |  |
| Differentiated Instruction and Flexible Teaching | "I take time to explain and read for them every question in order to support them to answer and guide them as well in answering" (FGD-T-Participant 6-L28-30)" You have to know your learner, where he is weak, that's where you'll address him, what his needs are, that's why they say differentiated instruction can be used. " (FGD-T-Participant 1-L48-50) |
| Use of Instructional Alternatives and Manipulatives | "We also use alternative methods like storytelling for problem-solving, action-based learning, and visual aids." (FGD-T-Participant 6-L11-12)" It's very important that the object is there because we have a learning by doing approach so it's more effective if there's an object that physically touches the child or interacts with the child." (FGD-T-Participant 8-L9-11) |
| Classroom Management | " Today one-on-one, tomorrow he's gone. When he comes back you're busy with another learner." (FGD-T-Participant 8-L27-28)" Sometimes, you have to cultivate the culture of respect because the child has no respect ma'am your classroom is messy ma'am." (FGD-T-Participant 1-L40-41) |
| **Other Factors d** |  |
| Commitment to Teaching Role and Patience | "I remind myself to be patient. Because you know, they need extra help. So ginhawa ug lalum and I remind myself that every learner is different" (FGD-T-Participant 2-L62-64)"I felt frustrated but reminded myself to stay patient. I adjusted my approach and found a new way to help them understand" (FGD-T-Participant 3-L54-55) |
| Optimism and Positive Framing | "Time management, focus on solutions, pause and adjust, progress takes time." (FGD-T-Participant 9-L24-25)"You have to go back to the reason why you enrolled…" (FGD-T-Participant 5-L30-32) |

**Social Support of General Education Teachers Handling Learners with Difficulty in Basic Learning and Applying Knowledge**

Social support systems create collaborative networks sustaining teacher motivation and adaptability. Peer consultation, parent communication, and institutional backing collectively enhance resilience in inclusive education. The same findings are found in studies conducted in the Philippines (e.g., Espinosa, 2024; Hechanova et al., 2022).

*Peer Support and Professional Consultation.*Teachers seek guidance from colleagues and former instructors for practical strategies. Online resources supplement professional knowledge, creating peer-driven exchanges that alleviate isolation effectively. This aligns with Lakkala et al. (2021) and Jamorol (2023) that collaborative support reduces stress and promotes professional resilience.

*Consistent Effort in Parent Communication.*Teachers maintain proactive communication with parents despite challenges. They provide extra guidance, updates, and support to ensure home-school consistency and collaborative learner development. This supports Walker & Bond (2025) and Russell & Qiu (2024) that proactive communication strengthens partnerships and improves student outcomes.

*Inclusive Policies and Teacher Dedication.*Teachers accept all learners despite inadequate training, fulfilling inclusive education mandates. Their moral responsibility transcends policy compliance, demonstrating unwavering commitment to education accessibility. This affirms Buslon et al. (2025) and Raja & Saddique (2023) that teacher dedication enables adoption of inclusive policies.

**Coping Skills of General Education Teachers Handling Learners with Difficulty in Basic Learning and Applying Knowledge**

Internal resilience strategies enable teachers to manage inclusive education demands. Emotional self-regulation and continuous learning foster professional growth and effective response capabilities. The same findings are found in studies conducted in the Philippines (e.g., Fabunan & Cabal, 2025; Arcuino et al., 2022) and Malaysi (Marzo et al., 2022).

*Emotional Self-Regulation.*Teachers employ pause techniques, breathing exercises, and mental stepping-back strategies. These methods maintain composure, prevent burnout, and create stable classroom atmospheres during challenges. This confirms Hriady et al. (2023) and Jamshad et al. (2023) that emotional regulation strategies reduce burnout and sustain effective teaching.

*Continuous Learning.*Seminars and training provide useful coping strategies despite brevity. Teachers build confidence through reflective practice, expert learning, and experience sharing among colleagues. This supports Woulfin & Jones (2021) and Mastrothanasis et al. (2021) that ongoing learning enhances teacher self-efficacy and classroom effectiveness.

**Flexibility of General Education Teachers Handling Learners with Difficulty in Basic Learning and Applying Knowledge**

Flexibility enables effective responses to varying inclusive classroom challenges. Adjusting methods, materials, and management strategies maintains positive environments while supporting learner success.

*Differentiated Instruction and Flexible Teaching.* Teachers create multiple lesson versions, varied groupings, and different activities. Individual assessments and explanations ensure equitable content access while maintaining meaningful engagement. This affirms Salazar & Gumanoy (2023) and Hameed et al. (2024) that differentiated approaches improve student motivation and classroom inclusivity.

*Use of Instructional Alternatives and Manipulatives.*Concrete and visual tools like storytelling, toys, and aids maintain learner attention. Learning-by-doing approaches with physical objects enhance understanding effectively. This supports James et al. (2024) and Chisunum & Nwadiokwu (2024) that alternative instruction significantly enhances student engagement and learning.

*Classroom Management.*Inconsistent attendance, mixed ability levels, and behavioral disruptions create unpredictable environments. Teachers constantly adjust, reteach lessons, and manage diverse classroom dynamics. This aligns with Li et al. (2022) and Simonsen et al. that positive relationships and flexible approaches enable effective classroom management.

**Other Factors that Contribute to Resilience**

Commitment and patience sustain dedication despite stress. Optimism and positive framing transform challenges into opportunities, maintaining motivation and professional resilience consistently.

*Commitment to Teaching Role and Patience.*Teachers demonstrate steadfast dedication despite frustrations. Patience becomes professional resilience, with teachers adjusting approaches while maintaining calm behavior and supporting struggling learners. This confirms Thompson (2024) and Sun et al. (2024) that commitment and patience create supportive environments enhancing student confidence.

*Optimism and Positive Framing.*Forward-looking attitudes view challenges as manageable and purposeful. Solution-focused thinking and remembering professional calling maintain hope, motivation, and meaningful inclusion perspectives. This supports Lu (2021) and Wang (2023) that teacher optimism increases student engagement and fosters strong learning relationships.

**Implications for Practice**

This study provides major implications to the following: theoretical, practical, and policy implications emerge to guide future research, educational practice, and institutional development.

Future theoretical work can expand by exploring how this social support, coping skills, and flexibility interact over time and across different educational contexts, potentially incorporating cultural and socio-economic variables to deepen the theory’s explanatory power.

For educators and school practitioners, teachers should be encouraged and supported to develop emotional self-regulation, patience, and adaptive instructional strategies to better navigate classroom challenges. Professional development programs should integrate training on flexibility and resilience-building alongside content knowledge. Furthermore, fostering proactive communication and collaboration with parents and peers can create a more resilient school community where educators feel supported, valued, and equipped to respond to diverse student needs.

At the policy level, educational leaders and policymakers must prioritize creating inclusive, supportive systems that embed resilience-building into the school culture and infrastructure. This includes ensuring accessible professional consultation and peer support networks, as well as promoting policies that encourage meaningful parent involvement. Investment in ongoing teacher training focused on emotional coping, differentiated instruction, and adaptive classroom management is crucial. Moreover, policies should address resource equity to reduce the burden of limited materials and preparation, recognizing that resilience is fostered not only by individual effort but also by systemic facilitation of supportive environments.

**Conclusion**

Based on the research findings, the Educational Resilience Theory of Rachmad (2022) is confirmed through teachers' demonstrated resilience mechanisms: social support systems, emotional self-regulation, continuous learning, instructional flexibility, and optimistic commitment. The theory emphasizes the importance of resilience in the educational process to confront and adapt to unexpected challenges and changes, validating that educational resilience encompasses comprehensive adaptive capacities beyond individual fortitude.

**Future Directions**

Based on the findings of my study, I recommend multiple regression analysis using the educational resilience of general education teachers as the criterion variable and using social support, coping skills, and flexibility as predictive variables. I also recommend the use of the emerging sub-themes that were identified in my study as indicators of the multiple regression analysis. Moreover, an explanatory analysis may be pursued in order to formulate questionnaires intended for the variables mentioned. Likewise, for the items of the questionnaires to be developed I suggest that those items may be extracted from the results and discussions of my study. I recommend employing regression analysis using resilience as an outcome, with support, coping, flexibility, and sub-themes guiding questionnaire development and explanatory analysis.

**Challenges**

My study identifies three primary challenges in fostering teacher resilience for inclusive education among educators, researchers, and policymakers: first, the struggle to balance theory and practice, as educators face difficulties applying research-backed strategies due to real-world constraints; second, issues with resource allocation and resistance to change, where budgetary limits hinder support initiatives and both educators and institutions may resist new reforms; and finally, the significant hurdle of measuring teacher resilienceeffectively, leading to disconnects in evaluation and potential misunderstandings, all of which underscore the critical need for effective collaboration among all parties to build sustainable teacher resilience.

**Ethical Approval:**

As per international standards or university standards written ethical approval has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

**Consent**

As per international standards or university standards, Participants’ written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

**DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)**

The author hereby declares that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of this manuscript.

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