

Resilience and Well-Being in Inclusive Classrooms Through Professional Crisis Intervention and Coping Strategies among Filipino Special Education Teachers in the United Arab Emirates: A Phenomenology

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study explored how resilience, coping strategies, and professional crisis intervention practices shaped the well-being and classroom responses of Filipino Special Education (SPED) teachers managing challenging student behaviors in inclusive classrooms in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Ten Filipino SPED teachers employed at GEMS Winchester Private School - Fujairah were selected through purposive sampling. Data were generated through validated semi-structured, in-depth interviews lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes, manually transcribed, and analyzed using Colaizzi's seven-step descriptive phenomenological method, supported by bracketing, reflexive journaling, member checking, and an audit trail. Ten theme clusters emerged: maintaining emotional control; understanding behavior as communication;

utilizing behavioral support strategies; prioritizing safety and de-escalation; following crisis intervention protocols; experiencing emotional and mental strain; practicing self-care and coping strategies; developing professional resilience and growth; seeking collaborative support systems; and implementing preventive behavior management practices. These converged into the overarching theme, "Navigating Challenging Behaviors Through Resilience, Coping Strategies, and Crisis Intervention Practices." The findings showed that resilience developed dynamically through repeated cycles of appraisal, regulation, evidence-informed intervention, reflection, self-care, and collaboration. The study concluded that teacher well-being and effective behavior management are interdependent and require both individual coping capacities and institutional support. The findings informed the RISE-UP Framework, a school-based professional development model for strengthening emotional regulation, behavior understanding, safety preparedness, resilience, collaboration, and preventive practice.

Keywords: *teacher resilience, special education, challenging behaviors, crisis intervention, coping strategies, teacher well-being*

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education increasingly depends on teachers who can sustain instructional quality while responding to diverse learner needs, behavioral crises, and emotionally demanding classroom situations. Global commitments to Sustainable Development Goal 4 place inclusive and equitable quality education at the center of educational reform, while scholarship on teacher resilience emphasizes that teacher well-being is closely connected with professional effectiveness, adaptation, and sustained engagement in challenging contexts (UNICEF Data, 2024; Hascher et al., 2021). For SPED teachers, this relationship is particularly important because

the work combines intensive individualized support, behavioral intervention, emotional labor, and responsibility for student safety.

The United Arab Emirates has established policy expectations intended to support safe, respectful, and inclusive learning environments. The Department of Education and Knowledge (2024), for example, emphasizes proactive behavior management, positive reinforcement, safeguarding, and early intervention. Within this environment, Filipino SPED teachers serve as expatriate professionals who must simultaneously navigate student diversity, institutional procedures, multicultural expectations, and the personal demands of living and working abroad. These contextual conditions can shape how teachers interpret stress, mobilize support, and maintain professional well-being.

Challenging student behaviors are a persistent source of occupational strain in special education. Aggression, emotional dysregulation, noncompliance, sensory overload, disruptive vocalization, elopement, and self-injurious or destructive behavior can interrupt learning and create immediate safety concerns. Studies of special education practice have likewise linked intensive behavior-management demands with emotional exhaustion, burnout risk, and the need for sustained professional support (Garwood, 2022; Deloria et al., 2025). At the same time, research indicates that individualized strategies, positive behavioral support, structured routines, sensory accommodations, and responsive communication can reduce escalation and strengthen student participation (Quizana & Espiritu, 2023; Mangarin & Comilang, 2024).

Resilience in this context is not simply a fixed personal trait. It develops through the interaction of individual capacities, workplace conditions, social support, professional learning, and successful adaptation to adversity. Social support and post-traumatic growth have been associated with stronger teacher resilience (Awwad-Tabry et al., 2023), while mentoring and institutional support can strengthen adaptation in diverse professional settings (Diab & Green, 2024). Professional development also contributes to teachers' capacity to manage stress and build adaptive resources (Shakimova et al., 2024). These findings suggest that effective support for SPED teachers must attend to both personal coping and organizational conditions.

Despite the growing literature on teacher resilience, behavior management, and special educator well-being, limited research has examined how these processes intersect in the lived experiences of Filipino SPED teachers working in the UAE. Existing studies often focus on behavior-management techniques, burnout, or resilience as separate concerns, leaving less attention to how expatriate teachers integrate emotional regulation, coping, crisis protocols, self-efficacy, cultural adaptation, and professional collaboration in real-time classroom practice. This gap is important because teacher responses to behavioral crises influence not only classroom safety and student support but also the sustainability of teachers' own professional engagement.

The study therefore explored how Filipino SPED teachers in the UAE experienced resilience, coping strategies, and professional crisis intervention protocols while managing challenging student behaviors in inclusive classrooms. It examined the meanings they assigned to these experiences, the themes that emerged across their narratives, and the practical implications for school-based teacher support. The study also sought to generate a framework that could strengthen teacher well-being, behavior-management competence, crisis preparedness, and collaborative professional learning without separating teacher welfare from the quality of inclusive education.

Literature Review

Teacher resilience and professional well-being

Recent literature conceptualizes teacher resilience as a dynamic and context-sensitive process rather than a purely individual characteristic. Hascher et al. (2021) positioned resilience and well-being within an integrative model that connects personal capacities with workplace and sociocultural conditions. Awwad-Tabry et al. (2023) similarly demonstrated the importance of social support in resilience and post-traumatic growth, while contemporary reviews have emphasized the need to measure resilience as a multidimensional construct that includes both personal and contextual resources (Daniilidou & Pezirkianidis, 2025). This perspective is especially

relevant to SPED teachers whose work routinely requires emotional regulation, adaptation, and sustained responsiveness to complex learner needs.

Organizational conditions also shape whether teachers can sustain resilience. Transformational leadership and professional resilience have been linked with job satisfaction and professional functioning (Kaya, 2024), while professional development can strengthen teachers' capacity to resist work-related stress (Shakimova et al., 2024). Supportive professional systems are likewise associated with retention and psychological empowerment in special education (Alon & Harel-Gadassi, 2024). These findings challenge approaches that place responsibility for well-being solely on individual teachers and instead support multi-level strategies that combine personal coping, leadership, professional learning, and collegial support.

Teacher well-being has direct implications for educational continuity and quality. Kurrle and Warwas (2025) emphasized the multidimensional nature of teacher well-being and the need to consider professional environments alongside personal factors. For Filipino SPED teachers working in an international context, resilience therefore involves sustaining emotional health and professional purpose while adapting to institutional expectations, cultural diversity, and demanding classroom situations.

Challenging behaviors in special education classrooms

SPED teachers encounter a wide range of challenging behaviors that can disrupt instruction and create safety concerns. Ahammed (2021) documented the complexity of teaching learners with disabilities, while Deloria et al. (2025) highlighted behavior-management challenges among teachers working with learners with autism. Such behaviors may include aggression, noncompliance, emotional outbursts, withdrawal, sensory overload, and communication-related frustration. Because these behaviors often arise from diverse underlying needs, effective responses require understanding the learner rather than relying on uniform disciplinary approaches.

Research consistently supports individualized and proactive behavior-management practices. Suparno et al. (2022) emphasized teacher analysis of behavior problems as a basis for intervention, while Quizana and Espiritu (2023) identified differentiated instruction, emotional understanding, positive behavioral support, professional development, and collegial assistance as coping and classroom-management strategies. Mangarin and Comilang (2024) further synthesized evidence on proactive management, positive behavioral interventions and supports, restorative practices, and social-emotional learning as approaches to disruptive behavior.

The literature nevertheless shows that even effective strategies can be difficult to sustain when teachers face high emotional demands, limited resources, or inconsistent support. Garwood (2022) linked special educator burnout with implementation challenges in behavior support plans, indicating that teacher well-being and intervention fidelity cannot be treated as separate issues. This reinforces the need to examine how teachers regulate themselves while simultaneously regulating the learning environment.

Coping, de-escalation, and crisis intervention

When challenging behavior escalates, teachers must balance student support with immediate safety. Crisis response therefore requires emotional control, rapid assessment, de-escalation, safeguarding, and adherence to institutional procedures. The UAE policy context reinforces this orientation by emphasizing proactive behavior management, positive reinforcement, early intervention, and safe school environments (Department of Education and Knowledge, 2024). These expectations provide a procedural context for teachers who must make decisions under pressure.

At the personal level, coping includes both problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies. Levy (2023) showed that special education teachers may use complex emotional strategies when coping with student aggression. In practice, coping can involve emotional distancing after work, mindfulness, prayer, recreation, family time, social support, and reflective practice, alongside direct problem-solving strategies such as visual supports, sensory accommodations, structured routines, and communication interventions. The combination of these strategies is important because managing a crisis can continue to affect a teacher emotionally after the immediate incident has ended.

Preventive and reactive strategies are not mutually exclusive. Ødegård and Solberg (2024) identified reactive strategies used by teachers during disruptive behavior, while the broader literature increasingly favors approaches that reduce the likelihood of escalation before crisis procedures are required. This balance between prevention and crisis preparedness is central to sustainable practice because it supports both student regulation and teacher confidence.

Collaboration, professional learning, and inclusive sustainability

Professional resilience is strengthened when teachers are not required to manage difficult situations in isolation. Diab and Green (2024) emphasized the value of support systems in diverse teaching contexts, and Zorde and Lapidot-Lefler (2025) described professional learning communities as catalysts for sustainable inclusive practice and human well-being. In SPED settings, collaboration with colleagues, therapists, coordinators, specialists, administrators, and parents can provide both technical guidance and emotional reassurance.

Collaboration also supports the development of self-efficacy through shared problem-solving, observation, feedback, and successful experience. As teachers accumulate effective strategies and receive support from others, they become more confident in identifying triggers, selecting interventions, and maintaining classroom stability. Valencia and Ambalong (2025) linked coping strategies with job satisfaction among special education teachers, while Zeng et al. (2025) highlighted the importance of support and working conditions for retaining teachers who work with children with challenging behaviors.

From a systems perspective, inclusive sustainability depends on linking teacher well-being, professional competence, and institutional structures. The literature supports professional learning that integrates behavior-management knowledge, emotional regulation, wellness, crisis preparedness, and collaborative practice rather than addressing these concerns separately. Such an approach aligns with the study's focus on resilience as an interaction among teacher appraisal, coping, self-efficacy, and contextual support.

Theoretical and conceptual framing

The study was guided by the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping and Social Cognitive Theory. The first framework explains how individuals appraise environmental demands and mobilize coping responses, while the second highlights the role of self-efficacy, mastery experiences, social learning, and environmental influences in adaptive behavior. Together, these perspectives support an interpretation of resilience as a process in which teachers assess behavioral stressors, evaluate available personal and institutional resources, act, reflect on the outcome, and build greater confidence through repeated experience.

The conceptual framework places challenging student behaviors as primary stressors that interact with teacher self-efficacy and coping or safety strategies. Contextual factors, including institutional policies, professional training, cultural values, and the UAE educational environment, shape these processes. The expected outcomes are teacher resilience and well-being. This framework provided the organizing lens for interpreting how Filipino SPED teachers understood behavioral crises and how their responses evolved through experience, professional support, and reflection.

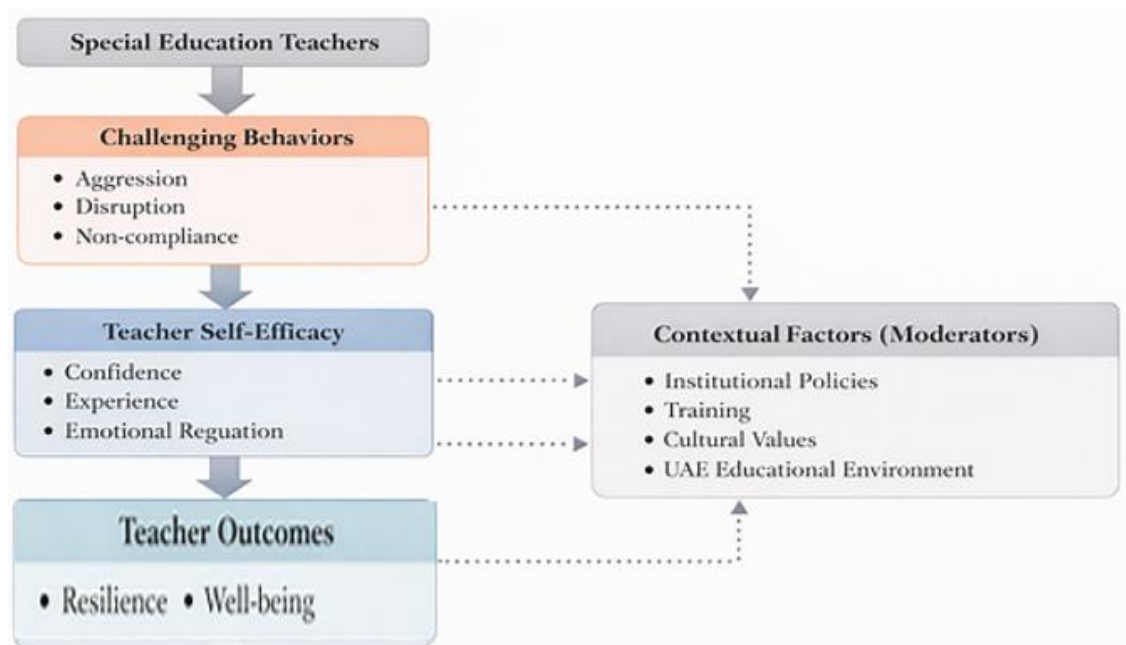


Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework of the Study*

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences, perceptions, and meanings of Filipino SPED teachers as they managed challenging student behaviors in the UAE. The design was selected because the research focused on how participants interpreted stressful classroom situations, enacted coping and crisis-intervention responses, and developed resilience and well-being through experience. Rather than measuring the variables statistically, the study sought a rich description of the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at GEMS Winchester Private School - Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates during academic year 2025-2026. The UAE provided a multicultural educational setting in which expatriate educators worked with learners from varied cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds. The locale also required teachers to work within local safeguarding, inclusion, and school behavior-management policies, making it appropriate for examining the interaction among professional practice, cultural adaptation, institutional procedures, and teacher resilience.

Participants and Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used to select ten Filipino SPED teachers who could provide information-rich accounts of the phenomenon. Participants were Filipino citizens currently employed as SPED teachers at the study site, had at least one year of continuous teaching experience in the UAE, had direct classroom experience with students with special educational needs, were proficient in English and/or Filipino, and voluntarily provided informed consent. Non-Filipino teachers, educators outside SPED roles, teachers with less than one year of UAE experience, personnel in exclusively administrative or non-classroom positions, and individuals who declined participation were excluded.

Research Instrument

Data were generated primarily through a semi-structured interview guide designed around the central and corollary questions of the study. The guide explored specific behavioral crises, teachers' immediate responses, thoughts and feelings, coping strategies, crisis-intervention practices, resilience development, and the influence of the UAE institutional and cultural context. Before data collection, the interview guide was evaluated by qualified experts in special education and qualitative research for clarity, relevance, appropriateness, and alignment with the study objectives. Their recommendations were incorporated into the final instrument.

Data Gathering Procedure

Formal permission and ethical clearance were secured before recruitment. Eligible participants received an invitation and informed-consent materials explaining the purpose, procedures, confidentiality safeguards, potential risks and benefits, and their right to withdraw without penalty. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were then conducted either face-to-face or through a secure online platform according to participant availability. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was audio-recorded with permission. Follow-up interviews were conducted when clarification was needed. The researcher manually transcribed the recordings and checked each transcript against the corresponding audio to ensure accuracy and fidelity.

Data Analysis

The study used Colaizzi's seven-step descriptive phenomenological method. The researcher first became familiar with the transcripts, extracted significant statements, formulated meanings, clustered related meanings into themes, developed an exhaustive description, synthesized the fundamental structure or essence of the phenomenon, and returned the findings to participants for validation. Bracketing and reflexive journaling were used throughout the analysis to identify and consciously set aside researcher assumptions. An audit trail documented permissions, interviews, transcripts, coding decisions, theme development, participant validation, and revisions, strengthening credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transparency.

Ethical Consideration

The study observed institutional and research-ethics requirements throughout the process. Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent. Pseudonyms were used in transcripts and reports, identifying information was removed, and research data were stored on encrypted devices with access limited to the researcher and authorized personnel. Sensitive discussions concerning aggressive behaviors, stress, and personal coping were approached with care, and participants could pause, skip questions, or withdraw from the study. The researcher also used reflexive bracketing, peer consultation, member checking, and transparent documentation to protect the integrity of participant voices and the ethical interpretation of their experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis produced ten interrelated theme clusters that converged into one overarching theme: "Navigating Challenging Behaviors Through Resilience, Coping Strategies, and Crisis Intervention Practices." The findings show that teachers' experiences were not limited to managing student behavior; they involved a continuous process of regulating emotion, interpreting student needs, applying behavioral and safety strategies, coping with psychological strain, collaborating with others, and transforming repeated challenge into professional resilience. Table 1 summarizes the theme clusters and their core meanings.

Table 1. *Theme Clusters and Core Meanings from Participants' Lived Experiences*

Theme Cluster	Core Meaning	Illustrative Participant Voice
Maintaining Emotional Control	Teachers intentionally remained calm to prevent escalation and support sound decision-making.	<i>"Stay calm... if I also became emotional, the situation would escalate."</i>
Understanding Behavior as Communication	Teachers interpreted behavior as an expression of emotional, sensory, social, or communication needs.	<i>"Behavior is a communication."</i>
Utilizing Behavioral Support Strategies	Visual supports, sensory breaks, routines, choices, and functional communication promoted regulation.	<i>"Visuals work wonders when speech fails them during a meltdown."</i>
Prioritizing Safety and De-escalation	Teachers placed the safety of the student, classmates, and staff before instruction or correction.	<i>"Safety first is really our priority."</i>
Following Crisis Intervention Protocols	Established school procedures provided structure, consistency, and safeguarding during crises.	<i>"We follow the classroom crisis intervention procedures."</i>
Experiencing Emotional and Mental Strain	Behavioral incidents generated stress, anxiety, fatigue, and emotional exhaustion.	<i>"After the situation, I felt emotionally and mentally drained."</i>
Practicing Self-Care and Coping Strategies	Prayer, mindfulness, family time, rest, boundaries, and peer support helped teachers recover.	<i>"I learned to detach after work and recharge emotionally."</i>
Developing Professional Resilience and Growth	Repeated experience strengthened patience, confidence, reflection, and adaptability.	<i>"Managing these behaviors has made me more resilient and proactive."</i>
Seeking Collaborative Support Systems	Colleagues, specialists, administrators, therapists, and parents strengthened teachers' capacity.	<i>"Working closely with my fellow SPED teachers and specialists makes a huge difference."</i>
Implementing Preventive Behavior Management Practices	Teachers increasingly used proactive routines and transition supports to reduce future crises.	<i>"Prevention and consistency are very crucial in handling behaviors."</i>

Emotional regulation, behavior understanding, and support strategies

The first three theme clusters show that effective intervention began with teacher self-regulation and an empathetic interpretation of behavior. Participants repeatedly described remaining calm despite fear or uncertainty because they believed visible anxiety or frustration could intensify a student's distress. Emotional control therefore functioned as both a coping strategy and a professional competence. This finding is consistent with research that links teacher well-being and resilience with the capacity to remain adaptive under demanding conditions (Hascher et al., 2021) and with qualitative evidence showing that emotional strategies are central when special educators cope with student aggression (Levy, 2023).

Participants also reframed challenging behavior as communication. Rather than interpreting aggression, meltdowns, noncompliance, or withdrawal as deliberate misconduct, teachers connected these behaviors with unmet emotional, sensory, social, or communication needs. This perspective encouraged supportive rather than punitive responses. Similar literature emphasizes the need to analyze behavior in relation to learner characteristics and context (Suparno et al., 2022) and to use differentiated, emotionally responsive, and positive behavioral approaches in SPED settings (Quizana & Espiritu, 2023).

The teachers translated this understanding into concrete behavioral supports, including visual schedules, sensory breaks, structured routines, visual choices, functional communication strategies, positive reinforcement, and transition warnings. These practices provided predictability and supported student regulation. Their use parallels the evidence synthesized by Mangarin and Comilang (2024) on proactive behavior-management approaches and the practical experiences reported by Deloria et al. (2025) among teachers managing behaviors of learners with autism. The findings therefore connect teacher emotional regulation with evidence-informed student support: the calmer and more interpretive the teacher response, the more purposeful the intervention became.

Safety, crisis intervention, and emotional strain

Safety and de-escalation formed the next layer of the teachers' professional response. Participants consistently prioritized the immediate protection of the student in crisis, classmates, and staff before returning to instructional goals. They described creating space, reducing stimulation, monitoring risk, and following safeguarding procedures. This pattern reflects the policy emphasis of the Department of Education and Knowledge (2024) on safe, supportive learning environments and reinforces the need for clear procedures when classroom behavior presents physical or emotional risk.

Established crisis-intervention protocols were particularly important because they reduced uncertainty during unpredictable incidents. Participants reported relying on classroom or school crisis procedures and risk-assessment steps to guide actions, maintain consistency, and coordinate with colleagues. These procedures functioned not simply as compliance requirements but as professional tools that strengthened confidence and accountability. The finding also addresses a concern in the special education literature: when teachers experience burnout or insufficient support, consistent implementation of behavior plans may be compromised (Garwood, 2022). Clear protocols can therefore support both procedural fidelity and teacher confidence.

At the same time, competent crisis response did not eliminate the emotional cost of the work. Participants described being stressed, mentally drained, physically tired, anxious, or emotionally exhausted after difficult incidents. Their accounts show that effective behavior management can coexist with substantial psychological strain. This is important because resilience should not be interpreted as the absence of distress. Rather, the teachers' experiences support a view of resilience as adaptation despite real emotional demands, a view consistent with contemporary research on teacher resilience and social support (Awwad-Tabry et al., 2023) and on the need to strengthen teacher well-being within professional systems (Kurrle & Warwas, 2025).

Self-care, resilience, collaboration, and preventive practice

Participants protected their well-being through personal coping strategies that included prayer, mindfulness, deep breathing, recreation, family time, rest, emotional boundaries, and deliberate separation of work stress from personal life. These practices enabled teachers to recover after emotionally demanding incidents and remain engaged in their professional roles. The finding aligns with evidence that coping strategies are associated with job satisfaction among special education teachers (Valencia & Ambalong, 2025). It also supports the broader argument that professional development should include stress-management and resilience-building rather than focusing only on technical teaching skills (Shakimova et al., 2024).

Resilience developed through repeated experience. Participants described becoming more patient, observant, emotionally strong, confident, reflective, and proactive as they encountered and successfully managed difficult situations. This growth indicates that mastery experiences strengthened self-efficacy and reduced the sense of helplessness that can accompany behavioral crises. Professional support accelerated this process: teachers sought assistance from colleagues, therapists, coordinators, administrators, specialists, and parents. Similar research emphasizes the importance of psychological empowerment and social support in special-education retention (Alon & Harel-Gadassi, 2024) and the contribution of professional communities to resilience in diverse contexts (Diab & Green, 2024).

Over time, participants shifted from primarily reactive responses toward preventive behavior management. They increasingly used structured routines, visual schedules, transition warnings, sensory accommodations, clear expectations, and consistent reinforcement to reduce triggers before escalation. This

progression shows professional learning in action: crisis experience was converted into anticipatory practice. The emphasis on prevention also supports research that favors proactive and individualized behavior-management approaches (Ødegård & Solberg, 2024; Suparno et al., 2022) and strengthens the case for professional learning communities that sustain inclusive practice through shared reflection and collaborative problem-solving (Zorde & Lapidot-Lefler, 2025).

Essence of the lived experience and theoretical interpretation

The essence of the phenomenon was the transformation of behavioral challenge into professional understanding, safety, and growth. Teachers did not experience resilience as a single personal quality that they either possessed or lacked. Instead, resilience emerged from repeated cycles of appraisal, emotional regulation, intervention, recovery, reflection, and collaboration. This process is consistent with the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping: teachers first interpreted behavioral incidents as threats to safety or instruction, evaluated their capacity and available resources, selected problem-focused or emotion-focused coping responses, and then reassessed the situation based on the outcome.

The findings also illuminate the role of self-efficacy. Successful crisis management, accumulated professional experience, training, and collaborative learning reinforced teachers' confidence in recognizing triggers and implementing interventions. The conceptual framework is therefore supported by the narratives: challenging behaviors functioned as stressors; coping and safety strategies shaped the immediate response; self-efficacy strengthened through mastery and social support; and the resulting outcomes included greater resilience, well-being, professional growth, and commitment. Contextual factors such as institutional procedures, professional training, cultural expectations, and the UAE school environment influenced each stage of this process.

This interpretation has practical implications for teacher retention and inclusive quality. Schools cannot depend on individual perseverance alone. Teachers who work repeatedly with challenging behaviors require structured crisis preparedness, professional learning, peer support, wellness resources, and opportunities for reflective practice. This systems orientation is consistent with evidence that teacher support and working conditions contribute to retention among professionals serving learners with challenging behaviors (Zeng et al., 2025) and with the wider inclusive-education agenda that connects teacher capacity with equitable learning opportunities (UNICEF Data, 2024).

Practical output: The RISE-UP Framework

Based on the thematic findings, the study proposed the RISE-UP Framework - Resilient, Inclusive, Safe, Empowered, and United Professionals - as a school-based professional development and resilience-enhancement framework. It organizes the participants' experience into six interconnected areas: emotional regulation, interpretation of behavior, evidence-based support, safety and crisis intervention, professional resilience, and partnership. The framework emphasizes that behavior management is continuous rather than episodic: teachers regulate themselves, understand the learner, provide appropriate support, ensure safety, strengthen their resilience, and work collaboratively before repeating the cycle as new situations emerge.

Table 2. *RISE-UP Framework Components and Intended Contribution*

Component	Focus	Intended Contribution
R - Regulate	Emotional regulation and teacher well-being	Build composure, stress management, healthy boundaries, and burnout prevention.
I - Interpret	Understanding challenging behavior	Identify behavior as communication and consider emotional, sensory, social, and communication needs.
S - Support	Evidence-based behavioral interventions	Use visual supports, routines, sensory strategies, communication supports, and reinforcement.

E - Ensure Safety	Crisis intervention and de-escalation	Strengthen risk assessment, safeguarding, de-escalation, incident response, and follow-up.
U - Uplift	Professional resilience and growth	Develop self-efficacy, reflection, adaptability, wellness, and continuous professional learning.
P - Partner	Collaborative support and professional learning communities	Strengthen peer mentoring, multidisciplinary collaboration, parent partnerships, and shared problem-solving.

The framework is intended to support a school culture in which teacher regulation, student-centered behavior understanding, safety, resilience, and collaboration are treated as mutually reinforcing dimensions of inclusive practice. Its proposed implementation as a continuous cycle reflects the study's central finding that teacher resilience is strengthened through ongoing experience, reflection, professional support, and preventive preparation rather than through one-time interventions.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the lived experience of Filipino SPED teachers managing challenging behaviors in the UAE was characterized by the continuous integration of emotional regulation, empathetic interpretation, evidence-informed behavioral support, safety, crisis preparedness, coping, and collaboration. Participants understood difficult behavior as meaningful communication, prioritized safety and de-escalation, and used visual, sensory, communication, and routine-based supports to help students regulate. Although behavioral crises created substantial emotional and mental strain, teachers sustained their work through self-care, social support, reflective practice, and adherence to professional procedures.

Resilience emerged as a developing professional capacity rather than a fixed trait. Repeated exposure to challenging situations, successful intervention, collegial support, and reflective learning increased participants' patience, confidence, adaptability, and self-efficacy. The findings also showed that teacher well-being and effective behavior management are interdependent: teachers require personal coping resources, but these resources are strengthened or constrained by institutional policies, training, collaborative networks, and the broader educational environment.

The study contributes an experiential account of how Filipino expatriate SPED teachers navigate inclusive classroom crises and translates that account into the RISE-UP Framework. The framework connects teacher regulation, behavior interpretation, evidence-based support, safety, professional resilience, and partnership, providing a practical basis for school-level professional development and support systems that can sustain both teacher well-being and inclusive educational quality.

Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusions, schools serving learners with special educational needs should strengthen integrated support for teacher well-being, behavior-management competence, and crisis preparedness. The following recommendations remain within the scope of the study and the experiences reported by participants:

1. Schools should institutionalize regular training on emotional regulation, de-escalation, safeguarding, crisis-intervention procedures, visual supports, sensory accommodations, functional communication, and preventive behavior management.
2. Administrators should establish sustained professional learning communities, peer mentoring, multidisciplinary consultation, and structured post-incident reflection so that teachers do not manage challenging behaviors in isolation.

3. Teacher-wellness supports should include accessible stress-management activities, opportunities for reflective practice, healthy workload and boundary discussions, and referral pathways when behavioral incidents produce significant emotional strain.
4. The RISE-UP Framework should be pilot-tested and evaluated for feasibility, acceptability, and potential contributions to teacher self-efficacy, resilience, behavior-management competence, well-being, and crisis preparedness before wider institutional adoption.
5. Future studies should examine other schools, nationalities, countries, and stakeholder groups; use longitudinal or mixed-method designs; and investigate relationships among resilience, self-efficacy, burnout, job satisfaction, institutional support, and teacher retention.

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