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Cultural Influences of Filipino Special Education Teachers on the Academic and Social Outcomes of Students with Diverse Disabilities

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the cultural influences of Filipino special education teachers on the academic and social outcomes of students with diverse disabilities in the United States. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the research examined the experiences of five Filipino special education teachers working in Illinois, Maryland, and New Mexico. Specifically, it investigated how teachers' cultural backgrounds influenced their teaching philosophies, instructional practices, students' social identity development, stakeholder collaboration, and the establishment of inclusive learning environments. Findings revealed that culturally responsive teaching practices contributed to improved student engagement, academic achievement, and social-emotional development. Participants incorporated Filipino traditions, cultural values, and celebrations into classroom activities while maintaining open communication with families and other educational stakeholders. These practices fostered mutual trust, strengthened teacher-student relationships, reduced behavioral concerns, and promoted an inclusive classroom atmosphere. Differentiated instruction, collaborative partnerships, and continuous professional development emerged as essential strategies for addressing diverse learning needs. Despite encountering resource limitations, cultural misunderstandings, and instructional challenges, participants demonstrated resilience, adaptability, and commitment to providing equitable educational opportunities. The study concluded that Filipino special education teachers' cultural identities and professional practices positively influenced students' academic progress, social interactions, and sense of belonging. It emphasized the importance of integrating culturally responsive pedagogies, strengthening family-school partnerships, and providing sustained professional development opportunities. Furthermore, the findings highlighted the value of cultural sensitivity and collaborative approaches in creating supportive educational environments where students with diverse disabilities can develop their abilities, build confidence, and achieve meaningful academic and social outcomes within inclusive educational settings.

Keywords: *Culturally Responsive Teaching, Special Education, Filipino Teachers, Academic and Social Outcomes, Inclusive Education*

INTRODUCTION

Culture plays a crucial role in shaping societies, with Eastern and Western cultures offering distinct approaches to values, social structure, and communication. While Western cultures tend to emphasize individualism and personal achievement, Eastern cultures prioritize collective harmony and familial ties (Salazar, 2023). These cultural differences foster empathy and cross-cultural understanding, broadening

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perspectives in a globalized world. The Philippines, influenced by both Eastern and Western traditions, is a prime example of a nation with a rich cultural heritage. Filipino teachers, known for values like "pakikitungo" (social interaction), "matulungin" (helpfulness), and "mapagmahal sa kapwa" (compassion), bring these cultural practices to their teaching roles abroad, particularly in U.S. special education classrooms.

While Filipino teachers' cultural practices serve as valuable tools in navigating foreign environments, they face challenges in adapting to new cultural contexts. In U.S. special education settings, the cultural backgrounds of both teachers and students with diverse disabilities often intersect, leading to potential misunderstandings. These cultural differences can affect students' academic and social outcomes, especially when their disabilities are misunderstood or stigmatized. Research suggests that the challenge lies not in the cultural differences themselves but in how teachers address students' needs through culturally responsive instruction and interaction (Fuller, 2021). Theories from scholars like Urie and Bourdieu emphasize the importance of understanding cultural backgrounds and social dynamics in fostering positive teacher-student relationships and enhancing educational outcomes.

This study addresses the gap in understanding how the cultural backgrounds of Filipino special education teachers influence the academic and social outcomes of students with diverse disabilities in U.S. schools, particularly in Jones Farrar, Freeport, Illinois; Ardmore, Springdale, Maryland; and San Juan, Española, New Mexico. It explores the cultural practices these teachers bring to their classrooms, the challenges they encounter, and how they overcome them. The findings aim to inform local Special School Departments on how Filipino teachers' cultural influences impact students' educational experiences.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to pinpoint the specific influences from the cultural practices implemented by five Filipino special education teachers operating in distinct special education classrooms in Freeport, Illinois, Springdale, Maryland, and Espanola, New Mexico, USA. By delving into the unique cultural practices these educators employed, the research shed light on their profound impact on a diverse student population's academic and social dimension, ultimately revealing the outcomes of their distinctive pedagogical approaches. Exploring these cultural influences was paramount, as it held the key to gaining insights that could inform inclusive practices, foster positive relationships, and enhance academic achievements for students with diverse disabilities within the specialized realm of special education.

In the course of the investigation, the researcher sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do the cultural backgrounds of Filipino Special Education teachers influence their teaching philosophies and instructional approaches in US special education classrooms?
2. How do the cultural practices of Filipino special education teachers contribute to the development of positive social identities among students with diverse disabilities within the special education context?
3. How do Filipino special education teachers collaborate with students, parents, and other stakeholders from diverse cultural backgrounds to create inclusive and culturally responsive special education environments?
4. In what ways do Filipino Special Education teachers integrate culturally relevant practices to address the academic and social outcomes of students with diverse disabilities?
5. What challenges do Filipino Special Education teachers encounter in incorporating cultural influences into their teaching practices, and how do they overcome these challenges to positively impact the academic and social outcomes of students with diverse disabilities?

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Statement of Assumptions

Based on the statements of the problem, the researcher came up with the following statements of assumption.

1. Cultural backgrounds significantly shape teaching philosophies and instructional approaches. The researcher assumed that Filipino Special Education teachers' cultural backgrounds substantially influence their overall teaching philosophies and the methods they employ in U.S. special education classrooms.
2. Cultural practices play a role in shaping positive social identities among students with diverse disabilities. There is an assumption that the cultural practices employed by Filipino special education teachers contribute positively to the development of social identities for students with diverse disabilities in the special education context.
3. Collaboration with diverse stakeholders is essential for creating inclusive environments. The assumption is that effective collaboration between Filipino special education teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders from diverse cultural backgrounds is necessary to establish inclusive and culturally responsive special education environments.
4. Culturally relevant practices are beneficial for addressing academic and social outcomes. It is assumed that integrating culturally relevant practices by Filipino Special Education teachers positively impacts both the academic and social outcomes of students with diverse disabilities.
5. Challenges exist in incorporating cultural influences, but they can be overcome for positive impacts. There is an assumption that Filipino Special Education teachers face challenges when incorporating cultural influences into their teaching practices, but overcoming these challenges is viewed as crucial for achieving positive academic and social outcomes for students with diverse disabilities.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study used a triangular theoretical framework, the cultural-ecological activity theory, cultural-capital theory, and culturally relevant pedagogy.

Cultural Ecological System Theory (CEST). This theory developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, offers a robust framework (Evans, 2024) for understanding the intricate interplay between individuals and their environments, particularly as applied to the study of Filipino special education teachers' influence on the academic and social outcomes of students with diverse disabilities.

CEST posits that an individual's development is shaped by a complex network of interconnected systems, each influencing and being influenced by the others (Cherry, 2023). These systems include the microsystem (immediate environment, such as the classroom), the mesosystem (interactions between microsystems), the exosystem (broader societal factors), and the macrosystem (cultural beliefs and values).

In the context of this study, CEST highlights the significance of cultural practices: unique cultural beliefs, values, and behaviors of Filipino special education teachers can significantly impact their interactions with students, families, and colleagues.

Microsystem interactions. The dynamics within the classroom, including teacher-student relationships, instructional practices, and classroom climate, are crucial in shaping student outcomes.

Mesosystem Connections. The interactions between the classroom and other systems, such as the home and the community, influence the overall educational experience.

Exosystem Factors. Societal factors, including educational policies, economic conditions, and cultural norms, can impact the resources available to schools and students, as well as the expectations placed on teachers and students.

Macrosystem Influences. Filipino cultural values and beliefs, such as collectivism, respect for elders, and a strong emphasis on family, can shape the educational environment and the expectations for student success.

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The macrosystem, as defined by Bronfenbrenner, is the overarching pattern of micro, meso, and exosystem characteristics of a given culture or subculture and contains systems such as the economic, social, educational, legal, and political systems. The macrosystem does not function independently of an individual. Instead, it exerts its influence by affecting its operations of the inner layers, shaping daily experiences, and ultimately, impacting individual development (Evans, 2024).

By examining how these systems interact and influence each other, CEST provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to the academic and social outcomes of students with diverse disabilities. This theoretical framework can guide research and inform educational practices aimed at fostering inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments.

***Cultural Capital Theory and Filipino Special Education Teachers*.** Pierre Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Theory posits that individuals possess cultural resources, such as knowledge, behaviors, and skills, that influence their success in social interactions and educational settings. These cultural resources, highly valued in society, determine one's social position and power. The more cultural capital a person possesses, the greater their social mobility (Loveless, B. 2023). Additionally, Pier (2024) explains that culture is all the myriad ways we create, communicate, identify, individuate, and connect with others or in a social group.

Bourdieu's theory aligns with Bronfenbrenner's Cultural Ecological System Theory, as both emphasize the role of accumulated knowledge and social interactions in shaping individual success. The acquisition of cultural capital is a social process (Ramsey, 2024), where students learn not only what to do but also how to do it, often guided by more knowledgeable others like teachers.

In the context of this study, Cultural Capital Theory is relevant for examining how Filipino special education teachers' cultural backgrounds contribute to the cultural capital available to students with diverse disabilities. Filipino teachers' understanding of cultural differences, including disabilities, can help create better connections with students and families, thereby enhancing students' academic achievements and social outcomes.

Key Implications are cultural sensitivity - teachers should be culturally sensitive and aware of the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students, culturally responsive practices - teachers should employ culturally responsive practices that address the unique needs and experiences of students from different cultures, and building relationships - teachers should build strong relationships with students and families to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment.

To sum up, Cultural Capital Theory provides educators with a framework for creating more equitable and effective learning environments by recognizing the crucial role of cultural resources in student success, especially for those with diverse disabilities.

***Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*.** Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), developed by Gloria Ladson-Billings, emphasizes incorporating students' cultural backgrounds into the learning process to create inclusive and engaging environments. CRP goes beyond "good teaching" by integrating students' cultural identities and perspectives into teaching to improve academic achievement, promote positive self-identity, and foster critical thinking (Howard, T. C. 2020). Teachers must continuously reflect on how their cultural experiences influence their teaching practices, adapting to students' diverse cultural backgrounds to meet their needs.

Ladson-Billings' approach, often called "Culturally Relevant Pedagogy 2.0," encourages a continuous process of growth where education sustains and nurtures students' cultural identities. Teachers are encouraged to build strong relationships with students and their families, incorporate cultural knowledge into lessons, set high expectations, and use differentiation and scaffolding to support diverse learners. Multicultural education, which fosters equality and justice, aligns with CRP by helping students thrive in a diverse world. Studies have shown that culturally responsive pedagogy enhances student achievement, belonging, and behavior by using real-life examples, promoting cross-cultural understanding, and creating supportive learning groups. Teachers who embrace this approach involve families, value students' cultural heritage, and use culturally diverse resources to create an inclusive classroom environment.

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In this study, applying CRP could help Filipino special education teachers integrate culturally relevant practices into their teaching methods. This approach would enhance both academic and social outcomes for students with diverse disabilities by making learning more inclusive and responsive to their cultural backgrounds.

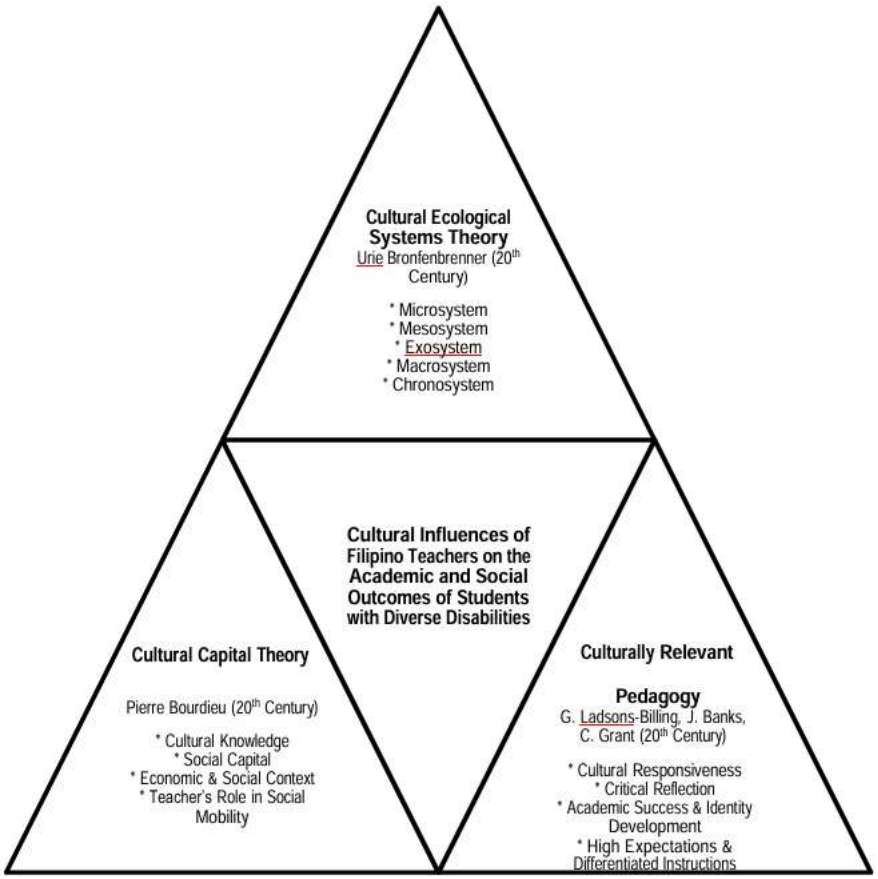


Figure 1. *Schematic Diagram of the Theoretical Framework of the Study*

Literature Review

The following related studies explained how the cultural backgrounds of Filipino Special Education teachers shaped their teaching philosophies and strategies for teaching students with diverse disabilities and how their cultural practices influenced students' academic and social outcomes. The studies also explained the challenges teachers might encounter in the workplace and how to overcome them.

The Cultural Background of the Filipino Special Education Teacher

Yazd (2020) defined Culture as sets of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of society, the ever-changing values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldviews created and shared by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors that can include a common history, geographic location, language, social class, and religion, or other shared identity. Culture plays a vital role in every individual's life. It shapes individual's worldviews and how communities address their societies' changes and challenges. For this reason, education serves as a critical vehicle for transmitting these value systems, learning from humanity's diversity of worldviews, and inspiring future creativity and innovation.

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This study emphasized the importance of culture and the critical role of special education teachers in shaping students' academic and social outcomes.

Background Profile of the Philippines and the Filipino Culture. The respondents in this study have a common place of origin, the Philippines. In his updated count, Fulgar (2023) states that the Philippines has 7,641 islands and a tapestry of rich cultural diversity. It is divided into three major geographical regions: Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, and home to at least 106 ethnic groups who use more than 180 languages. The Philippines' Indigenous peoples (IPs) are a testament to the resilience and adaptability of the Filipino culture, a unique blend of local and foreign influences. They are diverse and can be classified into different groups based on location, culture, and language. The Philippines, the third-largest English-speaking country in the world, has a unique cultural context in its education system. It is the only English-speaking archipelago in Southeast Asia, and most people follow the Catholic religion. Based on the American system, the Philippine education system uses English as the medium of instruction, highlighting the importance of language in the cultural context of special education in the Philippines.

Cultural Influences on Teaching Philosophies. Culture is the foundation of education, sustainable development, and governance in culture-based education. It provides perspective, methodology, principle, assessment, framework, and evaluation
upon which abilities, skills, and knowledge regarding a person and the world are disseminated. It is a teaching strategy and a philosophy of education where student learning is grounded on the community's unique values, norms, cultural beliefs, knowledge, practices, heritage, language, and experiences.

The Filipinos develop a great understanding, awareness, and appreciation of their history, arts, heritage, and geography towards the perception that will enhance the quality of life (Timtim, 2022). With the implementation of culture-based education, the Philippines envisions a future where culturally empowered and literate Filipinos lead high-quality lives locally and globally.

Filipino Cultural Values. Filipino teachers also build harmonious interpersonal relationships with students through their cultural values and trust as they interact with one another daily in special education classrooms. Menguin (2024) said Filipino values influence how we relate at home, school, church, and workplace. He added that Filipinos possess admirable values that, when reinforced, will create a great work culture and authentic leadership. He also emphasized that by understanding their values, teachers can bring out the best in Filipinos such as Warmth is the teacher's ability to demonstrate that he/she cares for the student; Empathy is the teacher's ability to understand the student's interpersonal communications; Respect is the teacher's ability to demonstrate a belief in
the student's ability to solve his/her problems; Genuineness is the teacher's ability to be authentic or honest with the students; Concreteness is the teacher's ability to pinpoint or accurately label the feelings and experiences of the students; Self-disclosure is the teacher's ability to reveal experiences of his/her own that are similar to what the student is experiencing; Immediacy is the teacher's ability to communicate to the student about his/her relationship as it exists, and Confrontation is the teacher's ability to inform the student of a discrepancy between what he/she has been saying and what he/she has been doing.

The studies described the cultural background of Filipino special education teachers, including their place of origin, language, profession, philosophies, teaching strategies, and values. These backgrounds are crucial in exploring how Filipino special education teachers shaped their teaching philosophies and strategies for teaching students with diverse disabilities in the US.

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The Cultural Practices of Filipino Special Education Teachers

Filipino teachers' cultural practices significantly impact US students by shaping classroom dynamics and pedagogical approaches. It highlights how Ethnic Studies backgrounds among Filipino American teachers enable the infusion of critical perspectives into mainstream content, influencing student engagement and community interactions.

Additionally, the presence of Filipino international teachers in US K-12 education systems contributes to addressing basic psychological needs and cultural influences, potentially enhancing student learning experiences. (Maravillas, 2019).

The unique home cultural traditions and customs. Filipino teachers are well-known for caring behavior and nurturing young minds, owing to their family-oriented cultural background (Menguin, 2024). He acknowledged Filipino cultural values, such as respect, bayanihan, religious, resilient, and family-oriented, and how these values significantly enhance individual learning experiences. Menguin (2024) said that Filipino children are taught to address their elders using terms of respect such as "po" and "opo." They are encouraged to perform acts of "pagmamano," where they take the hand of an elder and bring it to their forehead as a sign of respect. They are also very cooperative. The Bayanihan spirit is a cherished Filipino tradition emphasizing community cooperation and helping one another. It involves coming together as a community to accomplish tasks such as house construction or moving. This tradition promotes unity, solidarity, and a strong sense of community within Filipino homes. Filipinos are very religious, too. They attend church every Sunday, sometimes twice or thrice weekly. They are also resilient. In times of calamities and catastrophes, they always rise above the challenge. Instead of wallowing, they pick themselves up and smile. You can often find them saying beautiful Filipino words to each other and motivating each other. At the same, they take pride in their families. Family is first, whether you are part of the immediate family or belong to the third or fourth generation, and you are treated as a family member. Sometimes, even the closest of friends are considered family, too.

Applying cultural values in education positively affects several elements. It nurtures a sense of belonging and identity, strengthens community participation; it also promotes appreciation and understanding of history and cultural heritage. Cultural heritage, which encompasses old things and new objects, practices, and places that hold cultural value for recent generations, plays a significant role. The crucial role of the community's culture carriers in the teaching and learning process is maintained. Children are inculcated with a sense of responsibility for valuing, developing, and protecting the environment. Students develop competencies and cultural skills that are required to interact with people around the world. Culture instills a sense of national pride and develops an individual's identity as a nation. At the same time, preserving cultural memory will lead to a greater understanding of the nation's destiny in a global society and community of nations.

Teachers' behaviors that are believed to have positive effects are those in which students perceive their teachers to be caring, supportive, and helpful, deploying appealing diverse teaching practices, affirming the students' academic successes, demonstrating fairness, and fostering a classroom environment that allows curiosity and freedom of inquiry (Sun, 2021). Teachers must also understand students' backgrounds, foster a welcoming environment, creating a relationship of care and trust that impacts students' academic achievement (Portillo, 2023).

The studies emphasized incorporating cultural values into students' lessons to promote a positive social environment where there is respect and a sense of belonging. This paper explores how the respondents incorporated cultural values into their teaching and how these influenced students' academic and social identities.

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Collaboration Skills of Filipino Special Education Teachers

Related studies explain that students who receive Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) services learn in an environment with collaborative education (Lee, 2023).

Wilson College (2023) presented in summary the collaborating parties in special education, which involve general education teachers who provide education to students with diverse disabilities and needs according to school district curricula; special education teachers adapt students' lessons to accommodate students' behavioral, cognitive, physical, or emotional disabilities; paraprofessionals assist teachers with instruction and with tasks that address behavioral issues; family members and other loved ones ensure students' day-to-day needs are met and support school-based lessons at home; school administrators lead all aspects of school activities and services, ensuring compliance with educational regulations and guidelines; speech therapists help students with communicating issues; occupational therapist assists students in performing a variety of everyday tasks as needed and social workers assist in regulating social-emotional issues.

The team works together with the Special education teacher's initiation to promote inclusive education for students with diverse disabilities, support differentiated instruction, encourage student engagement, and enhance educational transparency that keeps everyone on the same page, values all knowledge and opinions, and builds trust and respect in the Special Education environment.

Collaboration Empowers. Teachers who build positive relationships with all their students significantly contribute to their success in and out of school. Lodhi (2023) enumerates three advantages of collaboration among teachers and students: First, Collaboration fosters teamwork, communication, creativity, and problem-solving skills among students, which are essential for their future success in the workplace and society; second, it enables students to learn from each other and share resources and ideas, which can enhance their understanding and interest in the subject matter, and third it creates a positive and supportive learning environment for students where they can grow and thrive together. This empowerment through collaboration is a source of inspiration and motivation for all involved.

In some studies, collaboration is essential for reflecting practices and exchanging knowledge among teachers, parents, and other service providers. It has been used as a primary strategy to generate creativity and innovation for creating effective educational programs. Bouchrika (2024) states that teacher collaboration can open doors for personal and professional development and benefit students and teachers alike. His study supports this, "Can Teacher Collaboration Improve Students' Academic Achievement in Junior Secondary Mathematics?" in which the results revealed that there is indeed a link between teacher collaboration and student achievement. In contrast, teacher isolation cannot contribute to student academic success.

The studies underscored the importance of collaboration among the team members, particularly under the guidance of special education teachers. This collaboration is crucial in creating a safe and secure environment for students, enabling them to thrive academically and socially. The paper explores how the participants in this study, including students, general education teachers, parents, service providers, and administrators, collaborated to support students' academic and social skills better. It highlights the significant role of each team member in this collaborative effort.

Integration of Culturally Relevant Practices

Culturally responsive teaching means using students' customs, characteristics, experiences, and perspectives to improve classroom instruction (Will & Najarro, 2022). They cited Gay's statement that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within students' lived experiences and frames of reference, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more efficiently and thoroughly. Will & Najarro (2022) highlight Gay's research about the five essential components of culturally responsive teaching: First, A strong knowledge base about cultural diversity. Teachers should understand different racial and ethnic groups' cultural values, traditions, and contributions to society and

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incorporate that knowledge into their instruction—second, Culturally Relevant Curricula. Teachers should include multiple perspectives in their instruction and ensure the classroom images represent a wide range of diversity. Teachers should contextualize issues within race, class, ethnicity, and gender. Third, there should be high expectations for all students. Teachers should help students achieve academic success while still validating their cultural identities. Fourth, an appreciation for different communication styles is needed. Teachers should understand different communication styles and modify classroom instructions accordingly. Fifth, The use of multicultural instructional examples. Teachers should connect students' prior knowledge and cultural experiences with new knowledge. Additionally, implementing multicultural education incorporates students' cultural identities into lessons and classrooms, often called culturally responsive teaching (KU SOE, 2023).

Burnham (2024) states that culturally responsive teaching also called culturally relevant teaching, is a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning. She added that when integrated into classroom instruction, culturally responsive strategies can have important benefits, such as strengthening students' sense of identity, promoting equity and inclusivity in the classroom, engaging students in the course material, and supporting critical thinking.

Will and Najarro (2022) referred to the 2016 synthesis of decades of research on culturally responsive teaching and related frameworks. They found that engaging in culturally affirming practices across subject matters, including mathematics and science, positively increased students' understanding and engagement with academic skills and concepts. For instance, students in high school math class could learn about statistics by assessing the probabilities of racial profiling cases in various neighborhoods or using other datasets applicable to their communities that bring up questions about justice and injustice. Culturally responsive teaching and similar approaches to teaching also increased students' motivation, interest in content, and perception of themselves as capable students, among other benefits, the study found. Brittany Aronson, an associate professor in educational leadership at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, and a co-author of the study said that

whenever teachers drew direct connections between classroom lessons and students' experiences outside of school, students could see greater value in the academic content as it applies to the real world. Such work helps students see themselves as knowledge producers and researchers.

Changing Perspective (2024) explained the benefits and importance of inclusion for all students, including students with diverse disabilities. First, Academic. Academic inclusion considers removing barriers preventing students from accessing the content, participating in classroom activities, and demonstrating their knowledge. This may involve providing accommodations or modifications for students with disabilities, ensuring that instructional materials are culturally responsive, or offering alternative ways of demonstrating mastery of the content. Second, Physical inclusion is the intentional design of all places and spaces on a school campus that cater to the diverse needs of students. It involves exceeding the minimum ADA accessibility requirements, such as wheelchair ramps, elevators, and wide doorways. Instead, it consists of designing a space that supports learning and enables students to be successful for an extended period—for instance, providing flexible seating arrangements such as standing desks and beanbag chairs. Physical inclusion considers access to sensory tools such as fidgets to help students be successful in a sensory calm environment. Third, Social. Social inclusion fosters an environment where disabilities are seen as positive qualities instead of shortcomings and

where teachers consider all students as their own. Encouraging participation in inclusive play and involving students in various activities provides opportunities for meaningful contributions. This approach cultivates a learning community that creates a sense of belonging, allows all students to participate in the social experience, fosters a sense of community in which diversity is valued, and ensures all students have a role. A study conducted by Indiana University and published in the Journal of Special Education in 2022 found that high schools implementing inclusive classrooms have higher grades and are better prepared for secondary education and future jobs. Inclusive classrooms have benefits that go beyond academic

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achievement. They help students develop self-confidence and improve their social interactions with their peers. Inclusive classrooms promote social and emotional development among students. Students learn to communicate effectively and work together by encouraging group activities and collaborative projects. In an inclusive classroom, teachers use a flexible teaching approach rather than a standardized one. They aim to create an environment where every student receives the support they need to succeed academically and develop the knowledge and skills required for success after graduation, regardless of their background or abilities.

The studies described effective ways for teachers to integrate culturally relevant practices, foster positive relationships among students and team members, incorporate students' cultures into their lessons, and promote inclusive education. The researcher in

this study examined how Filipino special education teachers integrated culturally relevant practices into their lessons and how these influenced students' academic and social skills in inclusive classrooms.

Challenges and Solutions

Teaching is a noble profession that plays a vital role in shaping the future of individuals and societies. However, it is not without its challenges, especially in today's world, where classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse. Hegwood (2023) shared common challenges teachers face daily and their solutions.

Understanding different learning styles. A single classroom most often contains students with diverse learning abilities and styles. It is nearly impossible for teachers to use one teaching method effectively for all learners. Teachers must think strategically when making lesson plans to cater to all classroom learning styles. They also have to be flexible while actively teaching, adjusting time-based on student performance. Teachers should employ differentiated instruction strategies. This involves tailoring lessons and activities to meet the individual needs of students. Providing various learning materials and incorporating different teaching methods can engage students with various learning styles.

Staying up to date with learning technology. Learning technology is constantly changing**.** Every year, a slew of new apps, websites, and other technology tools are created

to improve the learning process. Moreover, there is a lot of pressure on teachers to constantly stay up to date with the latest technology. Most believe the latest and greatest tools will provide the best education. Teachers should embrace what is new about technology.

Lack of Resources and Support. One of the significant challenges the teachers face today is the need for more resources and support. Many classrooms are overcrowded, making it difficult for teachers to provide individual attention to each student. Budget cuts often result in limited access to educational materials, technology, and teacher professional development opportunities. To address this challenge, educational institutions and policymakers must prioritize investment in education. Adequate funding should be allocated towards reducing class sizes, providing necessary resources, and offering ongoing professional development for teachers. Furthermore, partnerships with community organizations and businesses can help bridge the resource gap and provide additional support to teachers.

Language Barriers. Language barriers can pose significant challenges for teachers and students in diverse classrooms. Students who are non-native English speakers may need help comprehending the lessons and participating actively in classroom discussions. On the other hand, teachers may need help communicating complex concepts effectively to

students with limited English proficiency. Teachers can employ various strategies to address language barriers in the classroom. These strategies address the challenges and open new learning opportunities (Cara, C. 2022). First and foremost, they should create a supportive and inclusive environment where students feel comfortable expressing themselves. Visual aids, gestures, and real-life examples can help enhance understanding for students with limited English proficiency.

Cultural Differences and Sensitivity. Cultural differences can be both enriching and challenging in a

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diverse classroom. Students come from various cultural backgrounds, each with values, customs, and beliefs. Teachers must be sensitive to these differences and create an inclusive learning environment where all students feel respected and valued. To promote cultural sensitivity, teachers should incorporate diverse perspectives into their curriculum. This can include using multicultural literature, discussing global issues, and celebrating cultural festivals. Teachers should also address stereotypes and biases, fostering an environment of acceptance and understanding. Building relationships with students and their families can provide valuable insights into their cultural backgrounds and help create a more inclusive classroom.

Classroom Management. Maintaining discipline and managing behavior in a diverse classroom can prove challenging for teachers. Students may come from different socio-economic backgrounds or have varying levels of self-discipline. Cultural differences can also influence behavior expectations in the classroom. To effectively manage the classroom, teachers should establish clear expectations and rules from the beginning of the academic year. Consistency in enforcing these rules and providing positive reinforcement can help create a conducive learning environment (Cara, C. 2022). Additionally, implementing restorative justice practices and conflict-resolution techniques can promote student understanding and empathy. Building strong relationships with students based on trust and respect can also improve classroom management.

Resistance to Change. Resistance to changing established norms can significantly hinder improving school culture. Overcoming this challenge requires clear communication, empathy, and a well-defined plan for change that addresses concerns and uncertainties.

Professional development for staff**.** Providing ongoing professional development opportunities empowers educators to contribute positively to the culture. It equips them with the knowledge and skills to adapt to changing educational landscapes and effectively support student success. Involve parents and guardians. Actively involving parents and guardians in the school community fosters a sense of partnership and support. Their engagement in school activities, events, and decision-making processes enhances the overall educational experience for students.

Community partnerships. Collaborations with local organizations and businesses can enrich the school environment. These partnerships provide students with additional resources, mentorship opportunities, and real-world learning experiences.

Challenges are part and parcel of teachers' endeavors. When teachers and team members can see the bright side of them, they can change their perspectives and ways of collaborating with students and team members to support students' outcomes. This study will also examine the challenges Filipino special education teachers encounter in the US classrooms and how they overcome them.

METHODS

Research Design

The study used a qualitative case study design to gain in-depth insights into the impact of Filipino teachers on students with diverse disabilities. This approach allowed the researcher to explore complex cultural influences in special education by focusing on Filipino teachers' roles and their contribution to students' academic and social skills.

Data Collection involved interviews, observations, and document analysis. Interviews provided narrative data from Filipino teachers, while classroom observations and document analysis of educational materials offered contextual insights.

Data Analysis was conducted using thematic analysis to identify patterns related to cultural influences, teaching strategies, and student outcomes. Triangulation of data from multiple sources enhanced the study's validity and reliability.

Ethical measures, including informed consent and confidentiality, were followed. The findings were presented with detailed themes and insights, offering recommendations for special education practice,

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policy, and future research on cultural diversity.

Case Respondents

The respondents are all Filipino special education teachers from the Visayas region; three participants came from Negros province, and two came from Cebu province. They all speak their home languages at home, which are "bisaya" for Negros Oriental and "Cebuano" for Cebu. They also speak Filipino, their national language, and English, a borrowed language used as a medium of instruction across the curriculum.

The five Filipino special education teachers who were respondents in this case study have been teaching in US classrooms for more than a decade. To observe confidentiality, the researcher used coded names for the respondents, such as respondents A, B, C, D, and E.

Respondent A, a special education resource teacher at Jones Farrar Baccalaureate School, Freeport, Illinois, had seven (7) caseloads with diverse disabilities. His students were a mix of two Mexicans, three white, and two African Americans (black). These students had different reading, writing, math, and behavior needs and were identified as eligible for special education under IDEA law. Respondent A's students were a mix of students with a specific learning disability, health impairments, intellectual disability, emotional disability, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and autism spectrum disorder with mild to severe conditions. Additionally, some of these students have primary and secondary disability. During the intervention, Respondent A conducted pull-out and push-in services to students under his care. He received academic and functional support with appropriate accommodations, as reflected in students' IEPs (see Appendix C.1 on page 146).

On the other hand, respondents B, C, and D were special education self-contained teachers at Ardmore Elementary School, Springdale, Maryland. Respondent B had seven students; four were African American (black), two were white, and one was Mexican. Respondent C had eight students, four African American, two white, and two Mexicans, and Respondent D had two students, one Filipino and one Mexican. All were identified with autism spectrum disorder under IDEA law with mild to severe conditions. These seventeen students were identified with different reading, writing, math, and behavior needs. The three respondents taught academics and functional skills with appropriate accommodations reflected in their students' IEPs in the self-contained almost all day except for specials, in which their students were pulled out to mainstream with their regular peers (refer to Appendix C.2, 3, 4 on page 147).

Respondent E was also a special education resource teacher at San Juan Elementary School, Espanola, New Mexico, with twenty-four caseloads; fifteen were Mexicans, three were white, four were African American, and two were Asians. Respondent E's caseloads were a mix of students with a specific learning disability, intellectual disability, health impairments, hearing impairments, and autism spectrum disorders with mild to severe conditions. Some of them had primary and secondary disabilities. Additionally, these students have significant deficits in reading, writing, math, and behavior, as identified by IDEA law. Respondent E taught academics and functional skills with appropriate accommodations, as reflected in students' IEPs during pull-out and push-in intervention time.

Research Locale

The workplace of the five respondents is situated in the three schools in the United States: Jones Farrar IB Elementary School at Freeport, Illinois, Ardmore Elementary School in Springdale, Maryland, and San Juan Elementary in Espanola, New Mexico.

Jones Farrar Elementary School is an international baccalaureate world school. It is located in the distant town of Freeport, Illinois (refer to Appendix F.1 on page 183). It is open to students in Grades K-6 through an application process conducted each January. Jones-Farrar and other IB World Schools share a common philosophy and a commitment to high-quality and challenging international education for students. Its curriculum has four essential elements: concept, skills, attitudes, and action, incorporated into language

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arts, social studies, fine arts, mathematics, science and technology, and personal, social, and physical education. Jones Farrar encourages international-mindedness while helping students develop an understanding of their cultural and national identities. Jones Farrar has approximately 50 teachers and staff in 17 classrooms. The school houses a gym and an inquiry Center. Jones-Farrar has an active and dedicated Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO), which supports students and teachers throughout the year.

On the other hand, Ardmore Elementary School is a public school in Springdale, Maryland (see Appendix F.2 on page 184), a sizeable suburban setting. It has 409 students and serves grades preparatory kinder up to 5 (PK-5). The school's minority student enrollment is 99%. The student-teacher ratio is 13:1, and the student population comprises 53% female and 47% male students. The school enrolls 58% economically disadvantaged students. There are 32 equivalent full-time teachers and one full-time school counselor. San Juan Elementary is also a public school in Espanola, New Mexico (refer to Appendix F.3 on page 185), in a distant town setting. The student population of San Juan Elementary is 256, and the school serves K-6. San Juan has a minority student enrollment of 97%. The student-teacher ratio is 11:1, which is better than the district. Its student population comprises 54% female students and 46% male students. The school enrolls 86% economically disadvantaged students. There are 20 equivalent full-time teachers and one full-time school counselor.

Sources of Evidence

Sources and evidence refer to the information and data used to support an argument or claim. They can include primary sources, such as interviews or original documents, and secondary sources, such as books or articles. The researcher in this study used questionnaires and checklists to gather in-depth information from the respondents

during the interview and observation. These instruments were validated for authenticity purposes before the study was conducted.

This research's primary evidence sources were interviews, ocular inspection, and classroom observation. To gather in-depth information from the respondents in an interview, a set of five SOP questions with seven sub-questions were used for each. Likewise, the observation checklist had four main focus topics. These include teacher-instructional planning and preparation, classroom environment, culturally responsive, inclusive teaching classroom practices, and professional disposition. A student cultural identity checklist was also included to gather precise information about the student's cultural background.

Data Collection Procedure

The data-gathering process for this research was conducted in several systematic steps to ensure validity, reliability, and thoroughness. First, seven open-ended questions were prepared for each statement of the problem, serving as the primary instrument for data collection. These questions were then submitted to experts in the field for validation, where they provided constructive feedback and recommendations for improvement. The questions were revised based on the experts' suggestions, and the corrected version was presented back to the validators for finalization. Once finalized, a certification or formal approval of the questions was sought from the validators to establish their credibility.

Subsequently, a request letter was drafted to seek permission from respondents to conduct an in-depth interview. This letter was sent via email, detailing the purpose and significance of the study, and approval or confirmation for participation was requested. Follow-up communications were made through phone calls and emails to confirm the respondents' availability and finalize the interview schedule. Interviews were then conducted through video calls to facilitate real-time interaction and in-depth data collection.

After the interviews, the responses were transcribed to create a written record of the discussions. These transcripts were meticulously organized, and the researcher familiarized themselves with the data to

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identify patterns and insights. Finally, the responses were subjected to thematic analysis to extract core themes and meaningful insights aligned with the research objectives.

Validation of Instrument

To ensure the credibility and reliability of the interview questionnaire used in this study, the instrument underwent rigorous content and construct validation processes.

Content and Construct Validation. Content validation refers to the systematic evaluation of the questionnaire to determine whether its items comprehensively cover the subject matter being studied. This ensures that all relevant aspects of cultural influences on teaching practices and their impact on academic and social outcomes are addressed. Construct validation, on the other hand, assesses whether the questionnaire effectively measures the theoretical constructs it is intended to examine, such as cultural influences, teaching practices, and student outcomes.

Both validation processes are critical to this study as they ensure that the instrument is both comprehensive and aligned with the study's objectives. Proper validation guarantees that the data collected accurately reflects the cultural dimensions of Filipino Special Education teachers' practices and their impact on students with diverse disabilities.

Validation Procedure. The validation processes of the interview questionnaires are outlined below:

Submission to Experts. The interview questionnaire was submitted to at least two experts in the fields of Special Education and cultural studies. These experts were chosen based on their extensive knowledge and experience in the study's focus areas.

Feedback and Recommendations. The experts meticulously reviewed the questions for relevance, clarity, and alignment with the research objectives. They provided constructive feedback, which included suggestions for rewording ambiguous items, adding new questions to cover overlooked aspects, and removing redundant or irrelevant items.

Revisions Based on Feedback. The researcher revised the questionnaire based on the experts' recommendations. Changes included improving the phrasing of questions to enhance clarity, ensuring cultural sensitivity, and incorporating additional questions to address specific cultural practices influencing teaching and student outcomes.

Presentation for Finalization. The revised version of the questionnaire was presented back to the validators for their review and approval. The experts examined whether the revisions addressed their initial feedback and whether the final instrument met the required standards for validity.

Certification and Approval. After finalizing the questionnaire, the validators provided a formal certification or written approval. This certification served as evidence of the instrument's validity and credibility, reinforcing its suitability for use in the study.

The study ensured that the interview questionnaire was robust, reliable, and capable of yielding data that accurately reflected the nuanced interplay between Filipino cultural influences and the educational outcomes of students with diverse disabilities by adhering to these validation processes.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher protected respondents' rights, confidentiality, and informed consent, as these ethical considerations were crucial in this case study. Three things were observed as the latter implemented and started gathering the needed information. These were obtaining informed consent from the respondents, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity in reporting findings, and respecting the privacy and sensitivity of the information gathered. The use of coded names of the respondents and students in the study was considered to observe privacy and confidentiality.

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Data Analysis Procedure

In this qualitative investigation, the researcher utilized Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis model. This model offers a systematic approach to identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data. It has emerged as a versatile and widely adopted qualitative research method across diverse disciplines (Bonsteel, 2012). At the forefront of this approach stands the seminal work of Braun and Clarke, who have meticulously outlined a six-phase framework to guide researchers in the systematic and rigorous analysis of qualitative data.

The six phases of thematic analysis, as applied in the study, are detailed below:

Familiarization with the Data. The first step involved immersing in the collected data. This began with transcribing the interviews with Filipino Special Education teachers, reading and re-reading the transcripts, and noting initial ideas and patterns. During this phase, the researcher aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the narratives shared by the respondents, particularly focusing on how cultural influences shape their teaching practices and impact the academic and social outcomes of students with diverse disabilities.

Generating Initial Codes. The researcher systematically coded the data by identifying significant phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that highlighted cultural influences and their perceived impact on students' outcomes. Each data segment was labeled with concise codes that captured its essence. For instance, codes such as *"family-oriented teaching approach"* or *"use of culturally relevant materials"* were assigned to relevant portions of the data. This step ensured that all relevant features of the data were systematically organized.

Searching for Themes. After generating initial codes, the researcher grouped related codes into potential themes. These themes represented broader patterns or concepts derived from the data. For example, codes such as *"collaborative family involvement"* and *"respect for elders in classroom management"* were clustered under the theme *"Filipino cultural values in pedagogy."* Similarly, codes related to adaptive teaching strategies and fostering inclusivity were grouped under themes like *"responsive teaching practices."*

Reviewing Themes. In this phase, the researcher reviewed the initial themes to ensure they accurately reflected the coded data and the research objectives. Themes were refined, combined, or discarded as necessary. For example, overlapping themes such as *"inclusive practices* and *"individualized strategies for students with disabilities"* were merged into a broader theme *"culturally adaptive instructional strategies."* A thematic map was created to visualize the relationships between themes and sub-themes.

Defining and Naming Themes. Each theme was further analyzed to identify the specific story it told about the data and how it related to the overall research questions. Clear definitions and names were assigned to each theme to encapsulate their essence. For example, the theme *"Filipino cultural values in pedagogy"* was defined as the integration of traditional Filipino cultural traits, such as family-centered approaches and respect for authority, into teaching practices that enhance student outcomes. These definitions ensured clarity and consistency in interpreting the themes.

Producing the Report. The final phase involved synthesizing the themes and sub-themes into a coherent narrative that addressed the research objectives. Direct quotes from respondents were included to illustrate the themes and provide evidence of the findings. The analysis was presented in a way that highlighted the nuanced interplay between Filipino cultural influences and the academic and social development of students with diverse disabilities, offering valuable insights and implications for Special Education practices.

The study ensured a robust and methodical approach to analyzing qualitative data, yielding meaningful and contextually rich findings, as the researcher applied Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis model in this study.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To explore how Filipino special education teachers' cultural backgrounds, influence their teaching philosophies and instructional methods, a systematic data analysis was conducted. Table 1 below shows how responses were analyzed through three steps: summarizing shared perspectives, coding for patterns, and extracting overarching themes. This process revealed a core theme capturing how these teachers integrate cultural values into their philosophies, shaping inclusive, culturally responsive environments for students with diverse abilities.

Table 1. *Thematic Analysis of Filipino SpEd Teachers' Cultural Influence on Teaching*

Summarized Responses	Coded Responses	Themes
Special Education Experience; Personal Connection to Special Needs; Cultural Identity; Impact on Teaching	The Influence of Cultural Identity and Personal Experience on Special Education Teaching	Cultural Sensitivity and Dedication in Special Education
Communication Style; Student Engagement and Behavior; Caring Environment; Cultural Values and Practices	The Role of Caring and Cultural Sensitivity in Enhancing Student Engagement and Well-Being	Cultural Sensitivity and Dedication in Special Education
Role of a Caring Adult; Promoting Independence; Instructional Strategies; Student Engagement and Problem-Solving	Fostering Independence and Resilience Through Caring Guidance and Effective Instructional Strategies	Cultural Sensitivity and Dedication in Special Education
Culturally Diverse Instructional Materials; Student Engagement and Comprehension	Enhancing Student Learning Through Culturally Diverse and Accessible Instructional Materials	Cultural Sensitivity and Dedication in Special Education
Cultural Adaptation and Learning; Flexibility and Adaptability; Collaboration and Support	Navigating and Adapting to U.S. Special Education Norms Through Continuous Learning and Collaboration	Cultural Sensitivity and Dedication in Special Education

The study found that the cultural backgrounds of Filipino special education teachers significantly shape their teaching philosophies and instructional approaches, resulting in the theme, “Cultural Sensitivity and Dedication in Special Education.”

In Step 1, teachers' responses revealed that values rooted in a collectivist, family-oriented culture—such as respect, compassion, and community care—shape their teaching. They view their roles as extending beyond academics to include mentorship and emotional support, fostering a warm, inclusive classroom environment. Many teachers also noted that growing up in diverse cultural settings in the Philippines enhanced their ability to connect with students from varied backgrounds and encouraged the use of culturally responsive teaching strategies.

Step 2 involved coding, identifying key concepts such as Cultural Sensitivity, where teachers adapt lessons to meet diverse student needs; Dedication and Compassion, with teachers investing in students' holistic development; a Holistic Teaching Philosophy, prioritizing students' academic, social, and emotional growth; and Flexible and Adaptive Approaches tailored to each student's unique background.

Step 3 led to the extraction of the theme, emphasizing how Filipino teachers’ cultural values drive their commitment to inclusivity and holistic education. Their dedication creates supportive learning environments where students with disabilities feel understood and capable of success. Through culturally responsive teaching, teachers adapt to students' needs, supporting both academic and personal growth.

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Table 2. *Thematic Analysis of Filipino SpEd Teachers' Cultural Practices in Fostering Positive Social Identities for Students with Disabilities*

Summarized Responses	Coded Responses	Themes
Role Modeling and Motivation; Cultural Appreciation and Inclusion; Positive Social Environment; Sense of Belonging and Expression	Fostering Student Motivation and Cultural Appreciation Through Inclusive and Supportive Educational Practices	Culturally Responsive Education for Student Motivation and Engagement
Cultural Relevance in Education; Student Engagement and Inclusion; Impact on Social Identity	Enhancing Student Engagement and Social Identity Through Culturally Inclusive Educational Practices	Culturally Responsive Education for Student Motivation and Engagement
Collaboration with Parents and Guardians; Team Collaboration; Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)	Collaborative and Culturally Sensitive Approach to Developing Individualized Education Plans	Culturally Responsive Education for Student Motivation and Engagement
Cultural Relevance in Education; Positive Self-Perception and Identity; Social Connection and Collaboration; Modeling Cultural Values	Enhancing Student Identity and Engagement Through Culturally Responsive Education	Culturally Responsive Education for Student Motivation and Engagement
Teaching Style and Effectiveness; Support and Approachability; Teacher-Student Relationship; Student Motivation and Confidence	The Impact of Supportive and Effective Teaching on Student Motivation and Confidence	Culturally Responsive Education for Student Motivation and Engagement

The study revealed the theme "Culturally Responsive Education for Student Motivation and Engagement," showing how Filipino special education teachers use cultural practices to support the positive social identities of students with diverse disabilities.

In Step 1 (Summarized Responses), teachers shared how they integrate Filipino values like pakikisama (cooperation), paggalang (respect), and malasakit (compassion) in their teaching. These values foster a respectful and inclusive classroom, motivating students and enhancing their engagement. Teachers also use culturally relevant examples and materials, making lessons relatable and boosting student interest.

Step 2 (Coding) highlighted recurring themes: Cultural Sensitivity, where teachers adapt methods to respect students' backgrounds; Motivation through Cultural Context, increasing student engagement with culturally familiar materials; Positive Identity Formation, helping students build self-confidence by fostering cultural pride; and Engagement and Participation, where students feel more connected and comfortable in learning.

In Step 3, the theme "Culturally Responsive Education for Student Motivation and Engagement" emerged, capturing how these teachers' cultural practices help students feel valued and confident. This approach affirms students' identities, celebrates their backgrounds, and supports their resilience and positive peer interactions, enriching their learning experience and self-identity.

Table 3. *Thematic Analysis of Filipino SpEd Teachers' Collaboration for Inclusive, Culturally Responsive Education*

Summarized Responses	Coded Responses	Themes
Intentional Grouping; Student Involvement in Decision-Making; Study Habits Improvement; Understanding Students Individually	Fostering Student Engagement and Connection Through Collaborative and Culturally Responsive Practices	Cultivating an Inclusive and Collaborative Special Education Environment

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Parent and Guardian Communication; Collaboration with Educators and Service Providers; Feedback and Trust	Effective Communication and Collaboration in Special Education Through Active Parent and Educator Engagement	Cultivating an Inclusive and Collaborative Special Education Environment
Student-Centered Focus; Non-Verbal Communication and Signals; Adaptation and Flexibility; Structured Guidance; Advocacy for Inclusivity and Respect; Translation and Accessibility	Creating an Inclusive and Respectful Learning Environment Through Adaptation, Structured Guidance, and Non-Verbal Communication	Cultivating an Inclusive and Collaborative Special Education Environment
Parent Involvement and Communication; Advisory Groups and Committees; Regular Communication	Enhancing Parent Engagement and Communication in Special Education	Cultivating an Inclusive and Collaborative Special Education Environment
Communication and Conversation; Mutual Respect and Empathy; Fostering Understanding and Bridging Divides; Facilitation and Mediation	Fostering Understanding and Collaboration Through Respectful Communication, Empathy, and Mediation	Cultivating an Inclusive and Collaborative Special Education Environment

The analysis revealed the theme "Cultivating an Inclusive and Collaborative Special Education Environment," highlighting how Filipino special education teachers work with diverse stakeholders to create culturally responsive and inclusive educational spaces.

Step 1 (Summarized Responses) showed teachers' dedication to building relationships with students, parents, and professionals. They emphasized the importance of understanding students' cultural backgrounds and keeping open lines of communication, especially with families, to tailor education to each student's needs. Teachers also actively engaged with therapists, counselors, and other professionals to develop individualized learning plans, fostering a sense of partnership and community support.

Step 2 (Coding) identified recurring themes: Collaboration with Families, where teachers actively involve parents in their children's education; Cultural Awareness in Collaboration, ensuring respect for cultural norms in communication; Involvement of Stakeholders, with teachers working with various professionals to address holistic student development; Inclusive Practices, where teachers adapt lesson plans and classroom activities to reflect diversity; and Support Systems and Open Dialogue, establishing strong communication channels to address challenges and celebrate progress.

In Step 3, the theme "Cultivating an Inclusive and Collaborative Special Education Environment" emerged, encapsulating the teachers' commitment to collaboration. This inclusive approach helps meet the educational needs of students with diverse cultural backgrounds and disabilities by engaging families in decision-making, respecting cultural differences, and adapting content to ensure each student feels valued. This theme underscores how open communication, cultural sensitivity, and strong support networks create a community-centered learning environment where students can thrive.

Table 4. *Thematic Analysis of Filipino SpEd Teachers' Use of Culturally Relevant Practices for Diverse Learners' Academic and Social Outcomes*

Summarized Responses	Coded Responses	Themes
Culturally Relevant Materials and Tasks; Differentiation and Personalization; Inclusive Representation; Language and Visual Supports	Creating Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Learning Environments Through Differentiated Instruction and Representation	Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Education for Enhanced Student Outcomes
Differentiated Instruction; Cultural Integration; Social Skills Development; Promoting	Enhancing Inclusivity and Understanding Through Culturally	Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Education for

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Diversity and Inclusivity; Inclusivity and Belonging	Responsive and Differentiated Teaching Practices	Enhanced Student Outcomes
Culturally Relevant and Accessible Materials; Celebration of Diversity; Relatability and Engagement	Fostering an Inclusive and Celebratory Learning Environment Through Culturally Relevant Materials and Diversity Emphasis	Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Education for Enhanced Student Outcomes
Inclusive Classroom Environment; Support and Encouragement; Cultural Celebration and Diversity; Relatability and Representation; Positive Social Interactions	Creating an Inclusive and Supportive Classroom Environment Through Cultural Celebration and Positive Social Relationships	Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Education for Enhanced Student Outcomes
Cultural Awareness Programs; Collaboration and Teamwork; Impact on Student Outcomes; Culturally Relevant Practices	Enhancing Student Outcomes Through Collaborative Efforts and Cultural Awareness Initiatives	Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Education for Enhanced Student Outcomes

The analysis of how Filipino special education teachers integrate culturally relevant practices to address academic and social outcomes of students with diverse disabilities revealed the theme "Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Education for Enhanced Student Outcomes."

Step 1 (Summarized Responses) highlighted that teachers recognize and incorporate their students' diverse cultural backgrounds into their teaching. They design lessons using culturally relevant examples and materials, which not only improve academic engagement but also foster a sense of belonging. Teachers shared that bridging students' cultural knowledge with new concepts enhances understanding and confidence. Additionally, they emphasized creating inclusive classrooms that promote respect for diversity, which helps students develop social skills, emotional well-being, and a positive sense of self.

Step 2 (Coding) identified key themes: Culturally Relevant Instructional Materials, where teachers use relatable resources to engage students; Bridging Cultural Knowledge and Academics, where they connect lessons with students' cultural experiences; Inclusive Classroom Environment, promoting respect for diversity; Social Development through Cultural Sensitivity, helping students navigate social challenges; and Tailored Support for Diverse Learners, ensuring teaching methods are adapted for students with disabilities.

Step 3 resulted in the extraction of the theme, which emphasizes how Filipino special education teachers use culturally responsive practices to enhance both academic and social outcomes. By reflecting on students' cultural backgrounds in lessons, teachers improve engagement, academic performance, and social development. This inclusive approach fosters a sense of community and belonging, helping students feel valued, confident, and better equipped to handle challenges.

In summary, the theme "Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Education for Enhanced Student Outcomes" reflects how culturally tailored teaching strategies create a respectful, engaging environment that supports the academic and social growth of students with disabilities, ensuring a holistic educational experience.

Table 5. *Challenges Faced and Overcome by Filipino SpEd Teachers in Integrating Cultural Influences for Positive Student Outcomes*

Summarized Responses	Coded Responses	Themes
Training and Professional Development; Attitude Towards Challenges; Cultural Understanding and Continuous Learning; Workload and Time Management	Navigating Professional Challenges with Flexibility and Continuous Learning	Adaptability and Continuous Learning for Overcoming Educational Challenges

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Language Barriers and Student Performance; Cultural and Linguistic Adaptation; Attitude Towards Language Challenges; Professional Development Needs	Overcoming Language Barriers Through Adaptation and Professional Development	Adaptability and Continuous Learning for Overcoming Educational Challenges
Relearning and Unlearning Practices; Creativity and Curriculum Modification; Resourcefulness; Engagement and Interest; Encouragement and Diverse Materials	Adaptability and Creativity in Overcoming Educational Challenges	Adaptability and Continuous Learning for Overcoming Educational Challenges
Understanding Student Backgrounds; IEP Reassessment; Need for Training and Seminars; Professionalism; Team Collaboration	Enhancing Student Support Through Cultural Awareness and Collaborative Efforts	Adaptability and Continuous Learning for Overcoming Educational Challenges
Extended Work Hours; Lack of Prep Time; Time Management	Effective Time Management and Dedication to Educational Preparation	Adaptability and Continuous Learning for Overcoming Educational Challenges

The analysis of challenges Filipino special education teachers faces in incorporating cultural influences into teaching led to the theme "Adaptability and Continuous Learning for Overcoming Educational Challenges."

Step 1 (Summarized Responses) revealed key challenges: Cultural Misunderstandings, where teachers struggle to connect with students due to unfamiliar traditions; Lack of Culturally Relevant Resources, making lessons less relatable; Balancing Individual Needs, requiring effort to address both cultural and disability-related needs; and Language Barriers, complicating communication for students from diverse language backgrounds. Despite these obstacles, teachers demonstrated resilience, using strategies like continuous learning, sourcing diverse materials, and collaborating with families and colleagues.

Step 2 (Coding) identified several strategies for overcoming these challenges: Professional Development, where teachers attend workshops and seminars to improve cultural understanding; Collaborative Problem-Solving with colleagues and families; Creative and Flexible Teaching Approaches, including storytelling and local examples to engage students; Resourcefulness in Finding Culturally Relevant Materials; and Patience and Persistence in addressing language and cultural barriers.

Step 3 led to the extraction of the theme, emphasizing teachers' adaptability and commitment to lifelong learning. By continuously growing professionally and creatively adapting their teaching practices, teachers positively impact student engagement and performance. Their dedication to creating inclusive classrooms promotes cultural respect, boosting students' social skills, confidence, and sense of belonging.

In summary, "Adaptability and Continuous Learning for Overcoming Educational Challenges" reflects how Filipino special education teachers face and address the complexities of cultural integration in teaching. Through resilience, collaboration, and ongoing growth, they enhance academic and social outcomes for students with diverse disabilities, fostering an inclusive, culturally responsive educational environment.

The Case Stories

In the course of this study, several compelling case stories emerged that vividly illustrate the intricate relationship between cultural sensitivity and educational outcomes. These case stories provide in-depth insights into the lived experiences of students and teachers, showcasing how Filipino educators' cultural backgrounds and teaching methodologies significantly influence both academic performance and social integration of students with diverse disabilities. The following case story serves as a poignant example of the transformative power of culturally responsive teaching in special education, highlighting the strategies, challenges, and successes encountered in creating inclusive and supportive learning

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environments.

Case Story 1: ***Cultural Sensitivity and Dedication in SpEd***

Setting the Scene. Respondent A had been a special education teacher at Jones Farrar Baccalaureate Elementary School for over a decade. The school, located in a culturally diverse neighborhood, served students from various backgrounds, each with unique needs and experiences. Respondent A was known not just for his expertise in special education but for his profound dedication to understanding and embracing the cultural contexts of his students.

Introducing student M. One fall, student M, a seven-year-old girl with mild autism, joined respondent A's class. Student M's family had recently immigrated from Mexico and spoke little English. Her parents were concerned about her ability to adjust to a new environment and a different language while also coping with her learning challenges.

Initial Challenges. Student M struggled initially. She was overwhelmed by the new sounds, faces, and routines. Her limited English made it difficult for her to communicate with her peers and teachers, leading to frustration and isolation. A noticed her discomfort and decided to take a proactive approach.

Cultural Sensitivity in Action. Understanding the importance of cultural sensitivity, A reached out to student M's parents. He learned about student M's background, family traditions, and the challenges they faced during their transition. Respondent A used this information to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for student M.

Classroom Adaptations. Respondent A implemented several classroom adaptations to support student M, a student with limited English proficiency. He introduced language support by integrating Spanish into the classroom, labeling objects in both English and Spanish and using simple Spanish phrases to communicate with student M. Additionally, he encouraged other students to learn basic Spanish words, fostering a sense of inclusion and mutual respect among the class. To make her feel more at home, respondent A incorporated Mexican cultural elements, celebrating Mexican holidays and using stories and materials that reflected her heritage, which not only made her feel valued but also enriched the entire class's cultural understanding. Furthermore, A used visual aids like schedules and established consistent routines to help student M navigate her day, bridging the language gap and providing her with a sense of security and predictability.

Dedication Beyond the Classroom. Respondent A's dedication extended beyond school hours. He attended community events and cultural festivals to understand the backgrounds of his students better. He also enrolled in professional development courses on cultural competence and inclusive education.

Building Trust and Progress. Gradually, student M began to open up. He started participating in class activities and making friends. His efforts to integrate cultural sensitivity into his teaching created a supportive and nurturing environment that allowed

her to thrive. Her academic performance improved, and she began to show signs of increased confidence and engagement.

The Ripple Effect. Respondent A's approach had a ripple effect throughout the school. Other teachers, inspired by his dedication and success with student M, began incorporating cultural sensitivity into their classrooms. The school administration recognized the positive impact and organized workshops on cultural competence for the entire staff.

Reflection and Continuing Dedication. At the end of the school year, he reflected on her journey. He realized that cultural sensitivity and dedication were not just about making students feel comfortable but about empowering them to succeed academically and socially. Student M's progress was a testament to the power of understanding and embracing diversity in education.

Conclusion. Student M's story illustrates the profound impact that cultural sensitivity and dedication can have in special education. By valuing and integrating students' cultural backgrounds, educators like him created inclusive environments where all students can thrive. This case story underscores

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the importance of continuous learning, empathy, and commitment to fostering an educational experience that respects and celebrates diversity.

Case Story 2: ***Culturally Responsive Education for Student Engagement***

Setting the Scene. Respondent D is a seasoned special education teacher at Ardmore Elementary School in a bustling urban area with a rich tapestry of cultural backgrounds. Known for her engaging teaching style and deep commitment to her students, she has always believed that understanding and integrating students' cultural contexts into her teaching practice is crucial for fostering motivation and engagement.

Introducing student S. Student S, a 12-year-old student of Filipino descent, has recently transferred to Ardmore Elementary School. His family had moved to the city from a rural area, and S found the transition challenging. He struggled to connect with his peers and felt disconnected from the new, fast-paced environment. His grades began to slip, and he became increasingly withdrawn.

Initial Challenges. Student S's lack of engagement was evident in her science class. Despite his efforts to participate, he seemed disinterested and seldom contributed to class discussions. Noticing this, respondent D decided to take a culturally responsive approach to help student S reconnect with his learning.

Culturally Responsive Strategies. Respondent D began by reaching out to student S's family to gain insight into their cultural background and experiences, particularly the challenges they faced after relocating. This helped her understand student S's perspective and establish trust. She then incorporated Filipino culture into her lessons, drawing on

Filipino history, folklore, and scientific contributions to make the curriculum more relatable and engaging for him. Additionally, she encouraged all students to share their cultural stories, fostering an inclusive classroom environment. This approach helped student S feel more comfortable and enriched the learning experience by introducing diverse perspectives.

Engaging Lessons. One of the most successful strategies respondent D employed was a project on environmental science. She asked students to research and present on environmental issues affecting their ancestral lands or communities. Student S chose to explore the impact of deforestation in the Philippines, a topic close to his heart.

Student S's Transformation. Working on this project, his attitude towards school began to change. He was passionate about the topic and eager to share his findings with his classmates. Respondent D provided guidance and support, helping him develop his research and presentation skills. The project culminated in a class presentation where he confidently shared his work, drawing connections between his culture and the scientific concepts they studied.

The Ripple Effect. Student S's newfound engagement had a ripple effect. His presentation intrigued his classmates and asked questions, leading to rich, culturally diverse discussions. His confidence grew, and he also began participating more actively in other subjects.

Reflection and Ongoing Dedication. Respondent D reflected on his journey as a testament to the power of culturally responsive education. Teachers can create a more inclusive and motivating learning environment by recognizing and valuing students' cultural backgrounds. She continued to seek ways to incorporate cultural relevance into her teaching, understanding that this approach not only engaged students like S but also prepared them for a diverse world.

Conclusion. Student S's story highlights the transformative impact of culturally responsive education on student motivation and engagement. By connecting with students' cultural identities and making learning relevant to their lives, educators like her can foster an environment where all students feel valued, understood, and inspired to succeed. This case story underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity and inclusion in achieving educational excellence and equity.

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Case Story 3: ***Cultivating an Inclusive and Collaborative Environment***

Setting the Scene. Respondent B is a dedicated special education teacher at Ardmore Elementary School, a diverse school known for its commitment to inclusive education. With over a decade of experience, she has always believed that collaboration and inclusivity are the cornerstones of an effective special education program.

Introducing student A. Student A, a 10-year-old student with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), has joined Ardmore Elementary. Despite his bright mind and curious nature, he faced significant challenges with social interactions and sensory sensitivities. His previous school experiences had been difficult, leaving him anxious about the new environment.

Initial Challenges. Student A's first few weeks at Ardmore Elementary were tough. He found it hard to connect with his classmates and often felt overwhelmed by the sensory stimuli in the classroom. His participation in class activities was minimal, and he struggled to express himself.

Building an Inclusive and Collaborative Environment. Respondent B established a supportive team to address student A's specific needs, assembling a collaborative group that included his parents, the school counselor, and both the occupational and speech therapists. Together, they crafted an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) tailored to his strengths and challenges. Recognizing the importance of social connections, Respondent B introduced a "buddy system," pairing student A with student F, a kind classmate guided in supporting him, which fostered empathy and a sense of responsibility. Additionally, respondent B adapted the classroom environment to better suit student A's sensory needs, setting up a quiet corner with noise-canceling headphones and soft lighting as a retreat for him during overwhelming moments. She also incorporated visual schedules and clear instructions to help student A navigate his daily routine, creating a structured, inclusive, and empathetic classroom setting.

Engaging and Inclusive Activities. Respondent B designed classroom activities that promoted inclusivity and collaboration. One notable project was the "Garden of Unity," where students worked together to plant and maintain a class garden. Student A's interest in plants and nature made this project particularly engaging for him.

Student A's Transformation. Student A began to open up while participating in the "Garden of Unity" project. He shared his knowledge about plants with his classmates, who were fascinated by his insights. Working alongside student F and other students in the garden, student A's social skills improved, and he started forming friendships.

Respondent B also incorporated sensory-friendly activities into her lessons, such as hands-on science experiments and art projects. These activities allowed student A to engage in learning without feeling overwhelmed.

The Ripple Effect. Student A's progress had a positive impact on the entire class. His classmates learned the value of patience, understanding, and collaboration. The inclusive environment fostered by respondent B created a sense of community, where every student felt valued and supported.

Reflection and Ongoing Commitment. She reflected on student A's journey as a testament to the power of an inclusive and collaborative special education environment.

By working closely with student A's support team and fostering a sense of belonging in the classroom, she was able to create a positive and enriching educational experience for student A.

She continued to seek innovative ways to promote inclusivity and collaboration in her teaching, understanding that these principles were key to supporting all students, especially those with special needs.

Conclusion. Student A's story highlights the transformative impact of cultivating an inclusive and collaborative special education environment. Through tailored support, peer relationships, and sensory-friendly adaptations, educators like respondent B can create a nurturing and effective learning space for students with diverse needs. This case story underscores the importance of teamwork, empathy, and inclusivity in achieving positive educational outcomes for all students.

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Case Story 4*: Inclusive, Culturally Responsive Education for Enhanced Student Outcomes*

Setting the Scene. Respondent E is a passionate third-grade teacher at San Juan Elementary School, a culturally diverse school in a bustling urban area. With a deep belief in the power of inclusive and culturally responsive education, she strives to create an environment where every student feels valued and empowered.

Introducing student H. Student H, an 8-year-old student of Mexican descent, has moved to the United States with her family. Her transition to San Juan Elementary was challenging; she faced a language barrier and felt isolated in the new cultural setting. Despite being bright and curious, student H struggled to participate in class and connect with her peers.

Initial Challenges. Student H's initial days at San Juan Elementary were marked by her silence and reluctance to engage in classroom activities. She often felt overwhelmed by the new environment and the English language, affecting her academic performance and social interactions.

Building an Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Environment. Respondent E fostered a welcoming and supportive environment for student H by embracing her cultural background. She began by learning about Mexican culture and integrating it into the classroom through bilingual labels and the inclusion of Mexican traditions in discussions and activities. To further support student H, respondent E paired her with student S, a bilingual classmate who helped her navigate classroom routines and provided translation when needed. This buddy system not only assisted student H but also encouraged student S's sense of empathy and responsibility. Recognizing student H's language needs, respondent E employed differentiated instruction by using bilingual resources, visual aids, and hands-on activities to enhance accessibility. Additionally, she attended workshops on culturally responsive teaching, reinforcing her commitment to supporting all students in a diverse learning environment.

Engaging and Inclusive Activities. Respondent E designed classroom activities that celebrated cultural diversity and encouraged student participation. One notable project was "Cultural Heritage Week," during which students shared aspects of their cultural backgrounds through presentations, food, music, and traditional clothing.

Student H's Transformation. During Cultural Heritage Week, student H's confidence blossomed. She proudly shared stories about her hometown in Mexico, brought in traditional Mexican food, and taught her classmates a simple Spanish song. Her peers were fascinated and respectful, which boosted her self-esteem and sense of belonging.

Respondent E also incorporated storytelling sessions where students could share folktales from their cultures. Student H eagerly participated, narrating Mexican folktales her grandmother had told her. These activities helped student H feel more connected to her classmates and the curriculum.

The Ripple Effect. Student H's increased engagement and confidence had a positive impact on her academic performance. She started participating more in class, asking questions, and completing her assignments with enthusiasm. Her peers also became more culturally aware and appreciative of the diversity in their classroom.

Respondent E's inclusive and culturally responsive environment created a supportive and enriching learning space. Students became more empathetic and collaborative, celebrating each other's differences and learning from one another.

Reflection and Ongoing Commitment. Respondent E reflected on student H's journey as a powerful example of the benefits of inclusive and culturally responsive education. By embracing her cultural identity and providing tailored support, respondent E was able to enhance student H's academic and social outcomes.

Respondent E remained committed to continuously improving her teaching practices to support all students, recognizing that cultural responsiveness and inclusivity were key to achieving positive educational outcomes. She shared her experiences with colleagues and advocated for school-wide initiatives that promote diversity and inclusion. Conclusion. Student H's story highlights the transformative impact of inclusive and culturally responsive education on student outcomes. By welcoming and valuing

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students' cultural backgrounds, providing differentiated instruction, and fostering peer support, educators like respondent E can create an environment where all students thrive. This case story underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity and inclusivity in achieving educational excellence and equity.

Case Story 5: ***Adaptability and Continuous Learning in Overcoming Educational Challenges***

Setting the Scene. Respondent C is a veteran special education teacher at Ardmore, a school known for its diverse student population and commitment to academic excellence. Throughout her 15-year teaching career, she has faced numerous educational challenges but has consistently demonstrated adaptability and a commitment to continuous learning.

Introducing student J. Student J is an 11-year-old student at Ardmore who struggles with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and anxiety. Despite being intelligent and inquisitive, student J finds it difficult to stay focused during lectures and often becomes overwhelmed by the fast-paced classroom environment.

Initial Challenges. At the beginning of the school year, Respondent C noticed that student J frequently seemed distracted and had difficulty completing assignments on time. During class discussions, he would often zone out or become anxious when called upon. Concerned about his academic progress and well-being, she decided to take a proactive approach.

Adapting Teaching Methods. The teacher collaborated with the school's special education coordinator to create a personalized learning plan for student J, tailored to his ADHD and anxiety. This plan included accommodations like extended time, preferential seating, and breaks. To engage James and other students, the teacher incorporated technology into lessons, using interactive simulations, online quizzes, and educational apps. Recognizing that traditional lectures might not be effective, the teacher employed a variety of teaching strategies, such as hands-on experiments, group projects, and visual aids, to cater to different learning styles. Additionally, a "flipped classroom" approach was introduced, allowing students to watch instructional videos at home and engage in interactive activities in class.

Continuous Professional Development. Respondent C recognized the importance of staying informed about the latest educational strategies and developments, especially in supporting students with diverse needs. She regularly attended workshops and seminars on inclusive education, ADHD, and anxiety management. These professional development opportunities provided her with new insights and practical techniques to enhance her teaching practices.

Student J's Transformation. Over time, respondent C's adaptive approach began to yield positive results. Student J showed significant improvement in his ability to focus during class and complete assignments. He became more engaged in hands-on activities and group projects, where he could apply his scientific knowledge in practical ways.

One notable project was the "Science Fair Extravaganza," where students worked in groups to present their experiments. Student J, who was initially apprehensive, teamed up with classmates to investigate the effects of different fertilizers on plant growth.

Respondent C provided guidance and support, ensuring that he felt confident and included throughout the project.

Student J's group not only completed their project successfully but also won first place at the science fair. This achievement boosted student J's self-esteem and demonstrated the effectiveness of respondent C's adaptive teaching methods.

The Ripple Effect. Student J's success had a positive impact on the entire classroom. His classmates became more aware of different learning needs and developed a greater sense of empathy and teamwork. The classroom environment transformed into a more inclusive and supportive space where all students felt valued and capable of achieving their best.

Respondent C's commitment to adaptability and continuous learning set a powerful example for her

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colleagues. She shared her experiences and strategies during staff meetings, advocating for a school-wide culture of adaptability and continuous professional development.

Reflection and Ongoing Commitment. Reflecting on student J's journey, respondent C realized the profound impact of adaptability and continuous learning in overcoming educational challenges. By tailoring her teaching methods to meet the unique needs of her students, she was able to foster an environment where every student could thrive.

She remained dedicated to her own professional growth and the continuous improvement of her teaching practices. She sought out new learning opportunities and encouraged her colleagues to do the same, emphasizing that adaptability and lifelong learning were essential for addressing the diverse challenges of modern education.

Conclusion. Student J's story illustrates the critical role of adaptability and continuous learning in overcoming educational challenges. Through personalized learning plans, the integration of technology, flexible teaching strategies, and ongoing professional development, educators like respondent C can create a supportive and dynamic learning environment. This case story highlights the importance of being adaptable and committed to lifelong learning to ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed academically and personally.

Case Study Findings, Interpretations, and Discussion

In this study, the researcher delves into the intricate dynamics of cultural sensitivity and its role in shaping educational experiences for students with disabilities. This section presents the case findings, interpretations, and discussion, highlighting how Filipino teachers leverage their cultural background to foster academic and social development. Through detailed case studies and comprehensive analysis, we explore the strategies employed by these educators, the resulting student outcomes, and the broader implications

for special education practices. The findings provide valuable insights into the significant influence of cultural factors in educational settings, offering a nuanced understanding of how culturally responsive teaching can enhance learning for students with diverse needs.

Case Story 1: ***Cultural Sensitivity and Dedication in SpEd***

Case Findings. Respondent A's case illustrates the impact of cultural sensitivity and dedication in special education. By integrating Filipino cultural elements—such as local stories, traditions, and customs—into his teaching, he made lessons more relatable and fostered a strong sense of community and belonging. His tailored instructional strategies, based on a deep understanding of his students' backgrounds, enhanced engagement and academic performance, especially in culturally relevant subjects. His open communication with families-built trust and involvement in the educational process, leading to increased student confidence, fewer behavioral issues, and positive social interactions among students.

Interpretation. The findings from his classroom underscore the importance of cultural sensitivity and dedication in special education. His culturally responsive teaching practices made learning more accessible and engaging for his students. By incorporating elements of Filipino culture into his lessons, he created a learning environment where

students felt seen, valued, and understood. This approach not only enhanced academic outcomes but also supported students' social and emotional development.

His personalized support and dedication to his students extended beyond the classroom. His efforts to engage with families and build strong relationships were crucial in creating a supportive network for students, which is essential for their holistic development. The increase in academic performance and positive social behaviors indicated that students thrived in an environment where their cultural identity was acknowledged and celebrated.

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Discussion. The case study of Respondent A emphasizes the importance of cultural sensitivity and dedication in special education. By integrating cultural elements into the curriculum and building strong relationships with students and families, teachers can create more engaging and supportive learning environments. This approach can lead to improved academic performance, social-emotional development, and overall student well-being.

Case Story 2: ***Culturally Responsive Education for Student Engagement***

Case Findings. The case of respondent D, a dynamic and innovative teacher at Ardmore Elementary School, reveals several key findings related to culturally responsive education and its impact on student motivation and engagement:

Respondent D integrated Filipino cultural elements into her lessons, using local folklore, history, and contemporary social issues. She employed culturally relevant materials and encouraged student participation by designing interactive and collaborative lessons. This approach led to increased student engagement, improved academic performance, and a more inclusive and respectful classroom environment.

Interpretation. The findings from her classroom illustrated the significant impact of culturally responsive education on student motivation and engagement. By integrating Filipino cultural elements into her curriculum, she made learning more relevant and meaningful to her students. This approach helped to bridge the gap between students' cultural identities and their educational experiences, fostering a sense of belonging and interest in learning.

Her student-centered learning approaches encouraged active participation and collaboration. By giving students the opportunity to share their cultural experiences and perspectives, she created a learning environment where students felt valued and respected. This inclusivity not only increased student engagement but also contributed to a positive and supportive classroom dynamic.

The increase in academic performance and the development of critical thinking skills among students highlights the educational benefits of culturally responsive teaching.

When students are motivated and engaged, they are more likely to invest effort in their studies and achieve better outcomes.

Discussion. The case of respondent D provided valuable insights into the role of culturally responsive education in enhancing student motivation and engagement. The following key points emerge from this case:

Integrating culturally relevant content can significantly increase student motivation and engagement. Student-centered approaches that prioritize cultural backgrounds create a more inclusive and dynamic learning environment. Culturally responsive education enhances academic performance, critical thinking, and social skills. Teacher innovation and a commitment to cultural awareness are crucial for effective implementation. This case demonstrates the powerful impact of culturally responsive education on student motivation, engagement, and overall development.

Case Story 3: ***Cultivating an Inclusive and Collaborative Environment***

Case Findings. Respondent B, a dedicated special education teacher at Ardmore Elementary School, has successfully cultivated an inclusive and collaborative environment in her classroom. Key findings from her case include the following:

Respondent B created an inclusive classroom by adapting her curriculum to meet each student’s unique needs through differentiated instruction and personalized learning

plans. Her collaborative approach extended to working closely with general education teachers, parents, and specialists, forming a supportive network for students. This teamwork fostered positive outcomes, with students demonstrating improvements in both academic and social skills, as well as increased self-

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confidence and participation. Her classroom became a space marked by respect, empathy, and encouragement, where students felt safe expressing themselves. Committed to continuous growth, she actively pursued professional development, staying informed on the latest special education practices to enhance her teaching methods.

Interpretation. The findings emphasize the importance of an inclusive and collaborative environment in special education. By tailoring the curriculum and personalizing learning, she ensured each student received the necessary support to succeed. Her collaborative efforts extended to working closely with parents, general education teachers, and specialists, creating a strong support network that enriched her students' educational experience. Positive outcomes, including improved academic performance and increased self-confidence, highlighted the effectiveness of her strategies. Through mutual respect and empathy, she fostered a safe and engaging classroom, while her dedication to professional growth equipped her to continuously meet her students' needs.

Discussion. Respondent B's case highlights the importance of fostering an inclusive and collaborative environment in special education. Key insights include the role of inclusive practices and differentiated instruction, which enable all students to engage meaningfully with the curriculum through personalized learning plans. Collaboration with parents, general education teachers, and specialists created a strong support network that enriched students' educational experiences and outcomes. Additionally, a positive classroom environment grounded in mutual respect and empathy allowed students to feel safe and supported. Respondent B's commitment to continuous professional development ensured she stayed informed on effective strategies, significantly benefiting her students both academically and socially. This case underscores how dedication to inclusion, collaboration, and a nurturing atmosphere can drive student success in special education.

Case Story 4: Inclusive, Culturally Responsive Education for Enhanced Student Outcomes

Case Findings. Respondent E, a dedicated teacher at San Juan Elementary School, effectively employed inclusive and culturally responsive teaching practices. Key findings from her approach include the integration of students' cultural backgrounds into her curriculum and the use of culturally relevant materials to make lessons engaging and relatable. Her inclusive strategies, including differentiated instruction, ensured full participation for all students, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities. This approach fostered high levels of student engagement and increased enthusiasm for learning, particularly among those from diverse cultural backgrounds. Academically, her students showed notable improvements, especially in subjects enriched by culturally responsive methods, as evidenced by improved test scores. Additionally, students demonstrated enhanced social interactions, a stronger sense of belonging, and greater confidence, benefiting from an environment that respected and valued their cultural identities.

Interpretation. The findings from Respondent E's classroom reveal the significant impact of inclusive and culturally responsive education on student success. By incorporating students' cultural backgrounds into her lessons, she created a classroom where students felt respected, engaged, and motivated. This approach enabled students to relate their cultural experiences to academic content, enhancing lesson engagement and connection. Her inclusive strategies, including differentiated instruction and varied assessments, allowed all students to access learning opportunities suited to their needs, resulting in improved academic performance and higher engagement. Additionally, the focus on students' cultural identities fostered a strong sense of belonging and self-worth, promoting positive social and emotional development that further supported their academic achievements.

Discussion. Respondent E's case underscores the powerful role of inclusive and culturally responsive education in improving student outcomes. Key insights include the value of incorporating students' cultural backgrounds into the curriculum, which made learning more relatable and helped students connect academic content to their personal experiences.

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Inclusive strategies, such as differentiated instruction and varied assessments, allowed all students to participate fully, promoting academic success in a positive learning environment. Culturally responsive teaching also increased engagement and motivation, as students felt seen and valued, leading to active participation. Valuing cultural identities further bolstered students' social and emotional growth, enhancing self-esteem and fostering a sense of belonging. This approach resulted in notable academic improvements and overall well-being, illustrating the impact of cultural relevance and inclusivity on holistic student development and success.

Case Story 5: Adaptability and Continuous Learning in Overcoming Educational Challenges

***Case Findings*.** Respondent C, a resourceful teacher at Ardmore Elementary School, exemplified adaptability and continuous learning to address educational challenges effectively. Key findings from her case highlight her use of adaptive teaching strategies, including technology integration, project-based learning, and personalized instruction to meet her students' changing needs. She prioritized professional development by attending workshops, taking online courses, and collaborating with colleagues to stay current with educational trends. Her student-centered approach encouraged participation, critical thinking, and student ownership of learning. Demonstrating resilience, she managed diverse challenges by employing flexible methods and seeking support from peers and administration. As a result, her students showed notable gains in academic performance, engagement, confidence, and problem-solving skills.

***Interpretation*.** The findings from Respondent C's classroom illustrate the essential role of adaptability and continuous learning in overcoming educational challenges. Her responsive teaching methods catered to diverse learning styles by integrating technology and innovative instructional strategies, creating an engaging and dynamic learning environment. Her commitment to professional development underscores the importance of lifelong learning for educators, as it enables her to stay informed of educational trends and implement effective practices. By prioritizing a student-centered approach, she empowered students to engage actively, fostering critical thinking and confidence. Her resilience in managing challenges, from technological limits to diverse student needs, underscores the value of flexibility and creativity in providing a supportive, high-quality education.

***Discussion*.** Respondent C's case highlights the vital role of adaptability and continuous learning in overcoming educational challenges. Key insights include the importance of adapting teaching strategies to meet diverse student needs and ensuring flexible and meaningful learning experiences. Her dedication to professional development
demonstrates the value of continuous learning for staying updated on educational trends, which enhances teaching effectiveness and student outcomes. A student-centered approach fosters engagement, critical thinking, and ownership of learning, leading to better academic performance and confidence. Her resilience in tackling classroom challenges showcases the need for effective problem-solving and collaboration. Overall, her adaptability and commitment to lifelong learning created a supportive, high-quality education environment that significantly improved student outcomes.

The Case Study Statement of Assumptions

Assumption 1. Cultural backgrounds significantly shape teaching philosophies and instructional approaches. The researcher assumed that Filipino Special Education teachers' cultural backgrounds substantially influence their overall teaching philosophies and the methods they employ in U.S. special education classrooms.

Based on the study, the assumption that cultural backgrounds significantly shape teaching philosophies and instructional approaches is strongly supported. The findings indicate that Filipino special education teachers' cultural values, beliefs, and experiences influence their:

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Teaching philosophies. They often adopt a holistic approach, prioritizing not only academic achievement but also social and emotional development.

Instructional approaches. They incorporate culturally relevant practices, such as using local stories, traditions, and customs, to make lessons more relatable and engaging.

Student-teacher relationships. They build strong relationships with students and families, often drawing on cultural values of respect, empathy, and community.

These findings suggest that cultural background is a powerful factor shaping the teaching practices of Filipino special education teachers, ultimately impacting the academic and social outcomes of their students.

Assumption 2: Cultural practices play a role in shaping positive social identities among students with diverse disabilities. There is an assumption that the cultural practices employed by Filipino special education teachers contribute positively to the development of social identities for students with diverse disabilities in the special education context.

Based on the study, the assumption that cultural practices play a role in shaping positive social identities among students with diverse disabilities is supported. Filipino special education teachers' cultural practices, such as:

Incorporating cultural elements into lessons: This helps students connect with their cultural heritage and build a strong sense of identity.

Celebrating cultural events and holidays: This fosters a sense of belonging and community among students.

Building strong relationships with students and families: This provides emotional support and guidance, contributing to students' positive self-esteem.

These practices create a culturally responsive and inclusive classroom environment where students feel valued, respected, and empowered. This, in turn, contributes to the development of positive social identities for students with diverse disabilities.

Assumption 3: Collaboration with diverse stakeholders is essential for creating inclusive environments. The assumption is that effective collaboration between Filipino special education teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders from diverse cultural backgrounds is necessary to establish inclusive and culturally responsive special education environments.

Based on the study, the assumption that collaboration with diverse stakeholders is essential for creating inclusive environments is strongly supported. The findings indicate that Filipino special education teachers value collaboration with:

Students: They actively involve students in the learning process, tailoring instruction to their individual needs and preferences.

Parents: They maintain open communication with parents, involving them in the educational process and seeking their input on their children's needs.

Other stakeholders: They collaborate with general education teachers, school administrators, and community members to create a comprehensive support network for students with diverse disabilities.

These collaborative efforts contribute to the creation of inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments where students feel valued, respected, and supported.

Assumption 4. Culturally relevant practices are beneficial for addressing academic and social outcomes. It is assumed that integrating culturally relevant practices by Filipino Special Education teachers positively impacts both the academic and social outcomes of students with diverse disabilities.

Based on the study, the assumption that culturally relevant practices are beneficial for addressing academic and social outcomes is strongly supported. The findings indicate that Filipino special education teachers' cultural practices, such as:

Incorporating cultural elements into lessons: This can increase student engagement, motivation, and understanding of the material.

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Using culturally responsive teaching strategies: This can help students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Building strong relationships with students and families: This can foster positive social and emotional development.

These practices contribute to improved academic performance, increased self-esteem, and enhanced social skills among students with diverse disabilities.

Assumption 5. Challenges exist in incorporating cultural influences, but they can be overcome for positive impacts. There is an assumption that Filipino Special Education teachers face challenges when incorporating cultural influences into their teaching practices, but overcoming these challenges is viewed as crucial for achieving positive academic and social outcomes for students with diverse disabilities.

Based on the study, the assumption that challenges exist in incorporating cultural influences, but they can be overcome for positive impacts, is supported. While Filipino special education teachers may encounter challenges such as:

Limited resources and materials: This can make it difficult to find culturally relevant resources.

Lack of training and support: Teachers may need additional training to effectively implement culturally responsive practices.

Cultural misunderstandings: There may be language barriers or cultural differences that can hinder communication and collaboration.

However, the study also suggests that these challenges can be overcome through:

Collaborative efforts: Working with colleagues, administrators, and community members to identify and address challenges.

Professional development: Seeking opportunities to learn about culturally responsive teaching practices.

Creative problem-solving: Developing innovative strategies to adapt materials and lessons to meet the cultural needs of students.

By overcoming these challenges, Filipino special education teachers can create more inclusive and effective learning environments for students with diverse disabilities.

Emerged Integrative Construct

The study explored the significant role of cultural sensitivity and responsive teaching in special education. Filipino teachers, known for their dedication and culturally attuned teaching practices, brought unique perspectives that profoundly influenced their students' learning experiences and outcomes.

This research led to developing an Emerged Integrative Construct, a comprehensive framework that integrates key themes identified throughout the study. These themes include Cultural Sensitivity and Dedication in Special Education, Culturally Responsive Education for Student Motivation and Engagement, Cultivating an Inclusive and Collaborative Special Education Environment, Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Education for Enhanced Student Outcomes, and Adaptability and Continuous Learning for Overcoming Educational Challenges.

The integrative construct emphasized a holistic and culturally responsive approach to special education, ensuring that students with diverse disabilities received academic support and social and emotional growth. By fostering an inclusive, engaging, and adaptable learning environment, this framework aimed to enhance these students' overall educational experience and outcomes, paving the way for their lifelong success.

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Below is the diagram showing the development of an emergent integrative construct, a comprehensive framework that integrates key themes identified throughout the study.

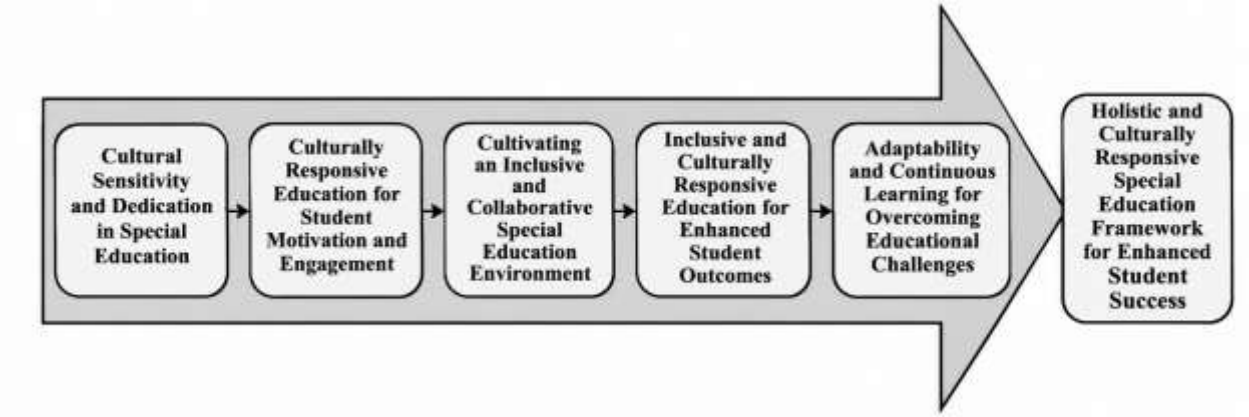


Figure 2. *Flow Diagram of the Holistic and Culturally Responsive Special Education Framework*

Summary of Findings

The study examined the significant role of Filipino teachers' culturally responsive teaching practices in special education. Through detailed analysis, the research uncovered how these educators' cultural sensitivity, dedication, and innovative strategies profoundly influenced the academic achievements and social development of students with diverse disabilities. The researcher also discovered the commonalities of respondents' cultural practices that impact students' holistic development. The findings offered valuable insights

into the essential elements contributing to effective and inclusive special education environments.

1. **Cultural Sensitivity and Dedication in Special Education.** Respondent A's case emphasized the powerful impact of cultural sensitivity and dedication in special education (Gomez, 2024). By integrating Filipino cultural elements—like local stories and traditions—and celebrating cultural events, he fostered a strong sense of community. His personalized instructional strategies and open communication with families-built trust and supported students' unique needs. The results included enhanced student engagement, improved academic performance in culturally relevant subjects, and positive social and emotional development, such as increased confidence and reduced behavioral issues. His approach illustrated the benefits of culturally responsive and supportive teaching in special education.
2. **Culturally Responsive Education for Student Motivation and Engagement.** Respondent D's case at Ardmore Elementary School demonstrated the transformative effects of culturally responsive education on student motivation and engagement (Caingcoy, 2023 & Howard, 2020). By integrating cultural references, local history, and contemporary issues into the curriculum, she made lessons more relatable, which boosted student interest, participation, and attendance. Her inclusive teaching practices, such as collaborative projects and community-based activities, accommodated diverse learning styles, fostering a positive, respectful classroom environment with fewer disciplinary issues. The cultural relevance in their teaching also led to academic improvements, as students retained material better when connected to their backgrounds. Feedback from students and parents was highly positive, noting renewed interest in challenging subjects and appreciating the connection between home and school learning. Overall, her approach enhanced

both student outcomes and the classroom atmosphere.

3. **Cultivating an Inclusive and Collaborative Special Education Environment.** Respondent B, a dedicated special education teacher at Ardmore Elementary School demonstrated the positive impact of inclusive and collaborative teaching practices (Caingcoy, 2023). She employed differentiated instruction and personalized learning plans to meet the diverse needs of their students, ensuring they felt valued and included. Through group activities and peer support systems, she fostered teamwork and regularly collaborated with general education teachers, parents, and specialists to build a strong support network. Her inclusive methods resulted in notable improvements in their students' academic and social skills, boosting students' confidence and participation. Respondent B also prioritized creating a supportive classroom environment marked by mutual respect and empathy, making students feel safe to express themselves. Committed to growth, she actively pursued professional development to stay informed of best practices, continuously enhancing her teaching to better serve her students.
4. **Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Education for Enhanced Student Outcomes.** Respondent E, an innovative educator at San Juan Elementary School demonstrated the powerful impact of inclusive and culturally responsive education. She employed differentiated instruction and individualized learning plans to meet their students' diverse needs while integrating culturally relevant materials (Caingcoy, 2023) that celebrated diversity and fostered a sense of belonging. Her approach resulted in heightened student engagement, making lessons relatable and motivating students to participate more actively. This inclusivity contributed to improved academic performance, particularly in culturally relevant subjects, and supported students' social and emotional development by boosting their confidence and encouraging positive peer interactions. Respondent E also strengthened their students' support network by maintaining open communication with families, building trust, and involving them in the educational process. Dedicated to continuous improvement, she pursued professional development to stay informed of the latest practices in inclusive education, ensuring her teaching remained effective and impactful.
5. **Adaptability and Continuous Learning for Overcoming Educational Challenges.** Respondent C, a dedicated special education teacher at Ardmore Elementary School exemplified adaptability and a commitment to continuous learning, using these qualities to overcome educational challenges. She skillfully adapted their teaching practices to meet their students' diverse needs, integrating new methodologies and tools that enhanced engagement and accessibility. Her pursuit of professional development ensured they remained informed of the latest educational practices, allowing them to apply innovative, technology-supported solutions to classroom challenges (Hegwood, 2023). This adaptability contributed to significant academic and social improvements among her students, fostering higher engagement, understanding of complex topics, and better overall performance. Respondent C also cultivated a supportive, dynamic classroom environment that encouraged students to explore, experiment, and develop essential skills for lifelong learning. Her collaborative approach extended to involving parents and the community, creating a strong support network. By embodying resilience and a growth mindset, she inspired her students to embrace challenges and persevere with confidence.
6. **It is assumed that Filipino special education teachers' cultural backgrounds strongly influence their teaching philosophies and methods in U.S. classrooms.** The study strongly supports the assumption that cultural backgrounds significantly shape teaching philosophies and instructional approaches, particularly for Filipino special education teachers in U.S. classrooms (Gomez, 2024). The findings reveal that these teachers' cultural values, beliefs, and experiences play a vital role in their teaching practices. They often adopt a holistic approach that emphasizes both academic achievement and social-emotional development, incorporating culturally relevant practices such as local stories, traditions, and customs to make lessons more engaging and relatable.

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Additionally, Filipino teachers tend to prioritize building strong relationships with students and their families, guided by cultural values of respect, empathy, and community. These culturally influenced approaches ultimately have a positive impact on the academic and social outcomes of their students.

7. **It is assumed that Filipino teachers' cultural practices positively shape the social identities of students with diverse disabilities in special education.** The study supports the assumption that Filipino special education teachers' cultural practices play a positive role in shaping social identities among students with diverse disabilities. These teachers incorporate cultural elements into lessons, helping students connect with their heritage and strengthen their sense of identity (Gomez, 2024). Celebrating cultural events and holidays fosters a sense of belonging and community while building strong relationships with students and their families and offers emotional support that boosts students' self-esteem. Together, these culturally responsive practices create an inclusive classroom environment where students feel valued, respected, and empowered, contributing to the development of positive social identities.
8. **It is assumed that effective collaboration among Filipino special education teachers, students, parents, and diverse stakeholders is key to creating inclusive, culturally responsive environments.** The study confirms that collaboration with diverse stakeholders is essential for creating inclusive, culturally responsive environments in special education (Howard 2020 & Caingcoy, 2023). Filipino special education teachers highly value collaboration by engaging students in the learning process to meet individual needs, maintaining open communication with parents for input on their children's needs, and working with general education teachers, administrators, and community members to build a strong support network. These collaborative efforts foster learning environments where students feel valued, respected, and supported, contributing to their overall success.
9. **It is assumed that culturally relevant practices by Filipino special education teachers enhance academic and social outcomes for students with diverse disabilities.** The study strongly supports that culturally relevant practices by Filipino special education teachers positively impact students' academic and social outcomes. These teachers integrate cultural elements into lessons to boost student engagement, motivation, and understanding (Caingcoy, 2023). By employing culturally responsive strategies, they foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and by building strong relationships with students and families, they promote positive social and emotional development. Together, these practices lead to improved academic performance, higher self-esteem, and enhanced social skills among students with diverse disabilities.
10. **It is assumed that Filipino special education teachers face challenges in incorporating cultural influences, but overcoming them is essential for positive student outcomes** (Gomez, 2024). The study supports that while Filipino special education teachers face challenges in incorporating cultural influences—such as limited resources, lack of training, and potential cultural misunderstandings—these obstacles can be overcome to achieve positive impacts on students with diverse disabilities. Teachers address these challenges through collaborative efforts with colleagues and communities, pursuing professional development, and using creative problem-solving to adapt materials and lessons. By overcoming these barriers, teachers create more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments, ultimately enhancing students' academic and social outcomes.

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CONCLUSION

The study revealed the significant role that cultural sensitivity and dedication played in enhancing educational outcomes. Filipino teachers' culturally responsive approaches have been shown to improve academic performance, foster social integration, and support the overall development of students with diverse disabilities. These findings emphasized the necessity of integrating cultural awareness into special education practices to create more inclusive and effective learning environments. The study's conclusions offered valuable insights for educators and policymakers aiming to address the diverse needs of students through culturally informed teaching strategies.

1. **Cultural Sensitivity and Dedication in Special Education.** The case of Respondent A at Jones Farrar Baccalaureate Elementary School highlights the positive impact of cultural sensitivity and dedication in special education. Key conclusions include the benefits of culturally responsive teaching practices, which improve student engagement, academic performance, confidence, and social skills. Strong, trust-based relationships with families also create a supportive educational environment that enhances learning outcomes. Additionally, the inclusion of cultural relevance in teaching reduces behavioral issues and encourages positive interactions among students. Overall, dedication to cultural sensitivity fosters a more inclusive, supportive learning atmosphere that promotes students' holistic growth and development.
2. **Culturally Responsive Education for Student Motivation and Engagement.** The case of Respondent D at Ardmore Elementary School demonstrates the powerful effects of culturally responsive education on student motivation and engagement Integrating cultural references into the curriculum significantly increased student engagement, making lessons relatable and inspiring active participation. Her inclusive teaching practices fostered a supportive classroom where students felt valued, leading to positive classroom dynamics, a reduction in disciplinary issues, and enhanced respectful interactions. This culturally relevant approach also resulted in academic improvement, with students showing better understanding and retention, especially in culturally resonant subjects. Furthermore, representation within the curriculum motivated students toward academic and personal growth, supported by positive feedback from parents who felt this approach bridged home and school environments. Overall, her innovative and inclusive practices highlight the substantial benefits of culturally responsive education in creating a dynamic, supportive, and engaging learning environment.
3. **Cultivating an Inclusive and Collaborative Special Education Environment.** The cases of Respondent B, a special education teacher at Ardmore Elementary School underscores the transformative impact of inclusive and collaborative practices in special education. Her use of inclusive classroom practices, such as differentiated instruction and personalized learning plans, has fostered a sense of belonging and engagement among all students. Her collaborative approach, involving group activities and partnerships with general education teachers, parents, and specialists, has created a comprehensive support system that enhances student learning. This inclusive and supportive environment has led to notable academic and social gains for students, boosting their confidence, participation, and positive interactions. Respondent B's commitment to professional development has further enabled them to implement effective, research-informed strategies that meet their students' evolving needs. Her dedication, adaptability, and focus on continuous improvement have been instrumental in creating an empowering learning atmosphere, highlighting the profound impact of inclusive education practices on student growth.
4. **Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Education for Enhanced Student Outcomes.** Respondent E's approach to inclusive and culturally responsive education at San Juan Elementary School has had a significant impact on student engagement, motivation, and achievement. By integrating cultural relevance into the curriculum, she made learning more meaningful and relatable, enhancing both academic performance and student involvement. Her commitment to inclusivity

ensured that all students, regardless of cultural or linguistic background, felt valued and supported. This inclusive atmosphere led to improvements in academic success, social skills, and students' confidence and sense of belonging. The nurturing environment she fostered allowed students to freely express themselves, mitigating any cultural or social barriers to learning. Additionally, her dedication to professional growth enabled them to implement effective, research-based strategies. These findings underscore the transformative impact of culturally responsive teaching in fostering an empowering, equitable, and high-achieving learning environment.

5. **Adaptability and Continuous Learning for Overcoming Educational Challenges.** Respondent C's commitment to adaptability and continuous learning at Ardmore Elementary School has proven instrumental in overcoming educational challenges and enhancing student outcomes. Her flexible approach to teaching allowed her to modify instructional strategies to meet diverse student needs, resulting in greater academic engagement and performance. Her dedication to professional development kept them informed of the latest educational methods, enabling them to implement innovative solutions that addressed issues like student disengagement and resource limitations. Her adaptability inspired resilience in their students, modeling a growth mindset that encourages them to view challenges as opportunities for growth. This supportive environment fostered collaboration and motivated students to take risks and learn from experiences. These findings illustrate the transformative impact of educators like the respondents in this study who are committed to evolving and enhancing their teaching practices.
6. **Filipino special education teachers' cultural backgrounds likely influence their teaching philosophies and methods in U.S. classrooms.** The study affirms that Filipino special education teachers' cultural backgrounds significantly shape their teaching philosophies and methods in U.S. classrooms. By integrating culturally relevant practices and prioritizing strong relationships with students and families, these teachers create inclusive environments that support both academic and social-emotional growth, ultimately benefiting students with diverse disabilities.
7. **Filipino teachers' cultural practices likely positively shape the social identities of students with diverse disabilities in special education.** The study confirms that Filipino teachers' cultural practices positively influence the social identities of students with diverse disabilities. By incorporating cultural elements, celebrating traditions, and fostering strong relationships, these teachers create an inclusive environment that strengthens students' sense of identity, belonging, and self-esteem, ultimately supporting their social development.
8. **Effective collaboration among Filipino special education teachers, students, parents, and diverse stakeholders is key to creating inclusive, culturally responsive environments.** The study confirms that effective collaboration among Filipino special education teachers, students, parents, and stakeholders is vital for creating inclusive, culturally responsive environments. By engaging students, communicating openly with parents, and partnering with school and community members, these teachers foster supportive settings that enhance students' sense of value, respect, and success.
9. **Culturally relevant practices by Filipino special education teachers enhance academic and social outcomes for students with diverse disabilities.** The study strongly supports that culturally relevant practices by Filipino special education teachers enhance both academic and social outcomes for students with diverse disabilities (Howard 2010). By integrating cultural elements, fostering critical skills, and building strong relationships, these teachers contribute to improved academic performance, greater self-esteem, and stronger social skills in their students.
10. **Filipino special education teachers face challenges in incorporating cultural influences, but overcoming them is essential for positive student outcomes.** The study shows that while Filipino special education teachers face challenges in incorporating cultural influences, these can be overcome through collaboration, professional development, and creative problem-solving.

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Successfully addressing these obstacles enables teachers to create inclusive, culturally responsive environments that positively impact students' academic and social outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on this study's findings, several key recommendations have been formulated. These recommendations aim to leverage the positive impact of cultural sensitivity and dedication in special education to enhance student outcomes. By fostering culturally responsive teaching practices, promoting family engagement, and supporting professional development, educators can create more inclusive and effective learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of students with disabilities. The following suggestions provide actionable steps for educators, administrators, and policymakers to implement these insights in their educational contexts.

1. **Cultural Sensitivity and Dedication in Special Education.** To enhance cultural sensitivity and dedication in special education, it is recommended that schools integrate culturally responsive teaching practices by including cultural elements relevant to students' backgrounds in the curriculum and celebrating diverse events to foster a sense of community. Personalized support should be provided by tailoring instructional strategies to each student's unique needs and maintaining open communication with families to build strong relationships. Regular teacher training, including workshops on cultural sensitivity and mentorship programs, will further support educators in implementing these practices. Schools should also implement systems to monitor the impact of culturally responsive teaching on student engagement, academic performance, and social skills, conducting regular assessments of student interactions. Lastly, fostering an inclusive school culture that values diversity among students and staff, and allocating resources for culturally responsive materials and training, will reinforce these practices. Altogether, these actions aim to improve academic and social outcomes for students from diverse backgrounds.
2. **Culturally Responsive Education for Student Motivation and Engagement.** To boost student motivation and engagement through culturally responsive education it is recommended that teachers integrate cultural elements like local stories and traditions into the curriculum, making learning more relatable and meaningful. Diverse and inclusive teaching practices should be fostered, utilizing collaborative projects and multimedia resources that reflect students' cultural backgrounds. Professional development focused on culturally responsive methods and inclusive classroom environments will enhance teachers' ability to connect with students. Strengthening home-schools connections by involving families and respecting their cultural perspectives further supports students. Representation in learning materials should be prioritized to validate students' identities, and supportive classroom norms should promote respect and collaboration. Culturally relevant assessments and continuous reflection on teaching practices will ensure fair evaluations and adaptability to classroom needs. Additionally, leveraging community resources and empowering students with choices in their learning enriches the educational experience. These strategies create a culturally responsive environment that enhances student motivation, engagement, and overall academic and social outcomes.
3. **Cultivating an Inclusive and Collaborative Special Education Environment.** To cultivate an inclusive and collaborative special education environment, educators should integrate culturally responsive teaching practices that reflect students' diverse backgrounds, incorporating local culture into lessons and celebrating cultural events to foster community. Personalized learning should be prioritized, with instructional strategies tailored to individual needs and open communication with families to build trust and support. Collaborative teaching practices, including group activities and partnerships with general education teachers and specialists, are essential for a comprehensive support system. A supportive classroom environment characterized by respect and empathy encourages student expression, boosting confidence and participation. Continuous professional

development in special education allows teachers to refine their methods and stay informed about best practices. Differentiated instruction should adapt the curriculum for diverse abilities, ensuring inclusivity. By promoting these strategies, educators enhance both academic and social skills, creating a more supportive, empowering educational experience. Regular self-assessment helps teachers keep their methods relevant, fostering positive student outcomes in a supportive and inclusive setting.

4. **Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Education for Enhanced Student Outcomes.** To create an inclusive and culturally responsive educational environment**,** teachers should integrate culturally relevant content into the curriculum, allowing students to see themselves reflected in their learning and enhancing engagement. Celebrating cultural diversity through events and activities fosters community and supports students' social and emotional development. Personalized learning plans tailored to each student's unique background and strengths help optimize academic outcomes, while strong home-school connections through regular family communication build trust and reinforce learning. Differentiated instruction accommodates diverse learning styles and abilities, promoting equity and academic growth. Collaborative learning activities, inclusive classroom practices, and equitable treatment further enhance social skills and respect among students. Teachers should pursue ongoing professional development to stay informed about best practices and engage in regular assessment and reflection to adapt their methods as needed. Empowering students with voice and choice in their learning increases motivation and fosters ownership. By applying these strategies, educators can create an inclusive, culturally responsive environment that supports academic and social growth for all students.
5. **Adaptability and Continuous Learning for Overcoming Educational Challenges.** To create a dynamic and responsive educational environment, schools should promote a growth mindset among educators, encouraging resilience and adaptability. Teachers are advised to embrace technology and innovation, using tools like educational software and interactive resources to enhance learning. Continuous professional development, such as workshops and further studies, keeps educators updated on best practices. Reflective practice enables teachers to assess and improve their methods, while collaboration with colleagues fosters shared solutions and innovation. Adaptable instruction tailored to student needs, along with regular formative assessments, helps address learning gaps. Building strong relationships with students and fostering a supportive learning environment promote engagement and motivation. Teachers should also empower students with voice and choice in their learning activities. Staying informed about educational research allows educators to implement evidence-based strategies. Schools should support teacher resilience through wellness programs and stress management resources. Implementing these strategies promotes continuous improvement, helping educators to overcome challenges and nurture a culture of lifelong learning for both teachers and students.
6. **Filipino special education teachers' cultural backgrounds likely influence their teaching philosophies and methods in U.S. classrooms.** The study shows that while Filipino special education teachers face challenges in incorporating cultural influences, these can be overcome through collaboration, professional development, and creative problem-solving. Successfully addressing these obstacles enables teachers to create inclusive, culturally responsive environments, that positively impact students' academic and social outcomes.
7. **Filipino teachers' cultural practices likely positively shape the social identities of students with diverse disabilities in special education.** It is suggested that schools provide support for Filipino teachers to incorporate cultural elements and celebrate traditions within the classroom, as these practices enrich students' sense of identity and belonging. Offering professional development focused on culturally responsive teaching can further strengthen teachers' ability to foster inclusive environments. Additionally, encouraging family involvement can help sustain strong, supportive

relationships that contribute to students' social growth and self-esteem.

8. **Effective collaboration among Filipino special education teachers, students, parents, and diverse stakeholders is key to creating inclusive, culturally responsive environments.** To maximize the impact of this research, it is recommended to quantify the positive outcomes of collaboration, such as increased student engagement or decreased behavioral incidents. Additionally, highlighting specific strategies employed by teachers, like regular parent-teacher conferences or co-teaching models, can strengthen the practical value of the findings. Finally, suggesting areas for future research and discussing potential policy implications can broaden the significance of the study.
9. **Culturally relevant practices by Filipino special education teachers enhance academic and social outcomes for students with diverse disabilities.** To further strengthen the impact of this study, it is recommended to quantify the positive outcomes of culturally relevant practices, such as increased academic achievement or improved social skills. Additionally, highlighting specific strategies employed by teachers, such as incorporating indigenous knowledge or using culturally responsive teaching materials, can enhance the practical value of the findings. Finally, suggesting areas for future research, such as investigating the long-term impact of culturally relevant practices on students' overall well-being, can broaden the significance of the study.
10. **Filipino special education teachers face challenges in incorporating cultural influences, but overcoming them is essential for positive student outcomes**. It is recommended to delve deeper into the specific challenges faced by Filipino special education teachers, such as limited resources or lack of training. Additionally, highlighting successful strategies used to overcome these challenges, such as collaborative partnerships or innovative teaching methods, can provide valuable insights for practitioners. Finally, suggesting areas for future research, such as investigating the long-term impact of addressing these challenges on student outcomes, can contribute to the ongoing development of inclusive and culturally responsive education.

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