

Teachers' Strategies and Challenges in Enhancing the Attention Span of Learners with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

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Abstract. This study examined the strategies used by special education teachers and the challenges they encountered in enhancing the attention span of learners diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). A descriptive correlational research design was employed, and data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to Grades Four to Six teachers in three inclusive schools in Cabanatuan City. The study assessed instructional, behavioral, and classroom management strategies, as well as the obstacles that hinder their application. Results indicated that teachers strongly agreed on the effectiveness of structured routines, visual aids, positive reinforcement, and clearly defined behavioral expectations in supporting learners' attention span. Nonetheless, they reported significant challenges such as limited training opportunities, lack of resources, time constraints, and difficulties in managing impulsivity and sustaining attention. Statistical analysis revealed a positive correlation between the challenges encountered and the implementation of classroom management strategies. The study concludes that while teachers employ effective approaches to address attention difficulties, sustained support is essential. It recommends targeted training, adaptive techniques, and stronger parent-teacher collaboration to foster inclusive and supportive learning environments for learners with attention-related difficulties.

Keywords: Attention Span; Classroom Management; Inclusive School, Instructional Strategy; Learner with Disability; Special Education Teacher; Teaching Challenge

1 Introduction

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a common neurodevelopmental condition that affects school-age children and is characterized by inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. One of its most challenging symptoms is a limited attention span, which often results in poor academic performance, particularly in tasks that demand sustained concentration. Globally, approximately five percent of children are affected (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022), with three to four percent of the population in the Philippines experiencing the condition (Philippine Pediatric Society, 2019). In the United States, prevalence estimates remain consistent at around 9.8% of children aged 3–17 years (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2023). Learners with this difficulty frequently struggle to follow instructions, complete tasks, and maintain focus during lessons, which negatively influences their academic achievement, social interaction, and emotional well-being.

ADHD is closely linked to impairments in executive functions, which are essential for planning, organization, and regulation of behavior in structured settings. These limitations affect not only school performance but also a learner's self-esteem and relationships with peers and teachers. Teachers play a crucial role in addressing these challenges by implementing strategies that foster engagement and improve the attention span of learners

with ADHD. Research highlights several effective approaches, including structured routines, the use of visual aids, positive reinforcement, and interactive teaching methods (Barkley, 2015; DuPaul & Stoner, 2014). Collaboration among teachers, parents, and specialists further strengthens support for learners by creating consistent and inclusive learning environments (Power et al., 2012).

Despite the availability of evidence-based practices, many educators report difficulties in identifying, adapting, and sustaining strategies that meet the diverse needs of learners. Limited resources, inadequate training, and classroom demands continue to hinder effective implementation (Owens et al., 2017). This study therefore seeks to investigate the strategies employed by teachers in enhancing the attention span of learners with ADHD and to examine the challenges they face in the process. By addressing this gap, the research aims to provide insights that will contribute to more responsive and inclusive classroom practices.

2 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive correlational research design, which was appropriate for examining both the current strategies used by teachers and the challenges they encountered, as well as exploring the statistical relationship between these two variables. The descriptive component documented instructional, behavioral, and classroom management strategies, while the correlational component determined whether the challenges teachers faced were associated with the implementation of specific strategies.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in three inclusive schools in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija: Cabanatuan East Central School in Bantug Bulalo, Lazaro Francisco Integrated School on Bonifacio Street, and Camp Tinio Elementary School in Camp Tinio. These schools were chosen because of their established inclusive education programs and ongoing efforts to support learners with attention difficulties. Their accessibility and commitment to evidence-based interventions made them appropriate sites for gathering data on teacher practices in enhancing the attention span of learners with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

2.3 Sample and Sampling Procedure

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, ensuring that only teachers with relevant experience were included. The sample consisted of three to five teachers from Grades Four, Five, and Six who had taught learners diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Teachers were identified with the assistance of school administrators and records, and only those directly involved with learners meeting the diagnostic criteria participated. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants.

2.4 Research Instrument

Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire constructed on a four-point Likert scale. The instrument was designed to capture teachers' perceptions of the

instructional, behavioral, and classroom management strategies they used, as well as the challenges encountered in applying these methods. The questionnaire also included items that allowed participants to provide suggestions for additional interventions. Content validity was established through consultation with experts in special education.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

The questionnaire was distributed to the participating schools and administered to the teachers individually. Participants rated each statement based on their actual classroom experiences. Responses were collected, compiled, and encoded for analysis. The structured format ensured consistency in responses and minimized bias.

2.6 Data Analysis

Collected data were analyzed using descriptive and correlational statistics. Frequencies, means, and standard deviations were computed to identify the most common strategies and challenges. Pearson's r was employed to determine the relationship between the challenges faced by teachers and the extent to which classroom management strategies were implemented. Statistical results were reported following APA 7th edition guidelines.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was secured prior to the conduct of the study. Informed consent was obtained from all teacher participants, and confidentiality of responses was strictly maintained. Participation was voluntary, and teachers were assured that data would be used solely for academic purposes. Special care was taken to minimize risks and uphold ethical standards when working with learners considered part of a vulnerable population.

3 Results

3.1 Teaching Strategies Used by the Special Education Teachers in Enhancing the Attention Span of the Learners with ADHD.

Table 1. Instructional Strategies

Statement	Mean	Verbal Description
1. Establishes clear lesson routines that signal a beginning and an end.	3.89	Strongly Agree
2. Gains students' attention at the beginning of the lesson and maintains it during instruction.	3.67	Strongly Agree
3. States expectations for seatwork in advance.	3.67	Strongly Agree
4. Monitors transitions by scanning and circulating among students.	3.44	Strongly Agree
5. Offers positive reinforcement to encourage active participation and effort throughout the lesson.	3.78	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean	3.69	Strongly Agree

Table 1 presents the means and verbal interpretations of instructional strategies used by teachers. The overall mean was 3.69, interpreted as *Strongly Agree*. Among the indicators,

establishing clear lesson routines obtained the highest mean (3.89), followed by offering positive reinforcement (3.78). Gaining students' attention and stating expectations for seatwork both received a mean of 3.67, while monitoring transitions had the lowest mean (3.44).

Table 2. Behavioral Strategies

Statement	Mean	Verbal Description
1. Uses positive reinforcement schedules. Reward consistent effort with verbal praise, stickers, or small privileges tied to specific behaviors.	4.00	Strongly Agree
2. Provides immediate feedback. Acknowledge correct responses or task completion promptly to reinforce desired actions.	4.00	Strongly Agree
3. Sets clear behavioral expectations. Post and review classroom rules (e.g., "Raise your hand to speak") using visual reminders like volume meters.	3.78	Strongly Agree
4. Redirects off-task behavior. Use non-verbal cues (e.g., a hand signal) to gently refocus students without interrupting instruction.	3.78	Strongly Agree
5. Ensure that students understand the consequences for specific behaviors, maintaining consistency in enforcement.	3.67	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean	3.84	Strongly Agree

As shown in Table 2, the overall mean for behavioral strategies was 3.84, interpreted as *Strongly Agree*. Using positive reinforcement schedules and providing immediate feedback both achieved the highest mean (4.00). Setting clear behavioral expectations and redirecting off-task behavior each obtained a mean of 3.78, while ensuring consistency in enforcement yielded the lowest mean (3.67).

Table 3. Classroom Management Strategies

Statement	Mean	Verbal Description
1. Creating one to one time with students in the classroom.	3.44	Strongly Agree
2. Prepares materials in advance.	4.00	Strongly Agree
3. Structure the classroom effectively.	3.89	Strongly Agree
4. Keep directions/lessons clear and concise.	4.00	Strongly Agree
5. Creates a welcoming and respectful atmosphere where all students feel valued and engaged.	4.00	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean	3.87	Strongly Agree

Table 3 summarizes the results for classroom management strategies, which had an overall mean of 3.87, interpreted as *Strongly Agree*. Preparing materials in advance, keeping directions concise, and creating a respectful classroom atmosphere all recorded the highest mean (4.00). Structuring the classroom effectively followed with a mean of 3.89, while creating one-to-one time with students obtained the lowest mean (3.44).

3.2 Challenges in Implementing the Strategies Used

Table 4. Challenges in Implementing Instructional Strategies

Statement	Mean	Verbal Description
1. It is difficult to differentiate instruction to meet the diverse needs of learners with ADHD while catering to the entire class.	3.22	Agree
2. I have received limited training and resources on ADHD-specific instructional strategies.it during instruction.	3.11	Agree
3. Providing individualized support to learners with ADHD is challenging due to limited time in the classroom.	3.44	Strongly Agree
4. Despite using visual aids and interactive teaching, maintaining the focus of learners with ADHD can be challenging.	3.33	Strongly Agree
5. Exploring new interactive and visual techniques to help learners with ADHD maintain focus.	3.78	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean	3.38	Strongly Agree

Table 4 presented the challenges encountered in implementing instructional strategies for learners with ADHD. Teachers reported agreement that differentiating instruction was difficult (M = 3.22, Agree) and that limited training and resources had been received (M = 3.11, Agree). Strong agreement was noted regarding the challenges of providing individualized support due to time constraints (M = 3.44), maintaining focus despite visual aids and interactive teaching (M = 3.33), and exploring new interactive techniques (M = 3.78). The overall weighted mean of 3.38 indicated strong agreement.

Table 5. Challenges in Implementing Behavioral Strategies

Statement	Mean	Verbal Description
1. Learners with ADHD frequently disrupt the class with impulsive behavior or excessive talking.	3.56	Strongly Agree
2. Learners with ADHD have difficulty in self-regulating their emotions, which can lead to outbursts or withdrawal.	3.22	Agree
3. Keeping learners with ADHD consistently engaged and motivated throughout lessons can be challenging.	3.44	Strongly Agree

4. Traditional discipline methods are not always effective in managing the behavior of learners with ADHD.	3.44	Strongly Agree
5. Finding ways to address impulsive behavior while keeping the class focused.	3.33	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean	3.40	Strongly Agree

Table 5 showed the challenges in implementing behavioral strategies. Teachers strongly agreed that learners with ADHD frequently disrupted class with impulsive behavior ($M = 3.56$) and that maintaining consistent engagement was challenging ($M = 3.44$). They also strongly agreed that traditional discipline methods were not always effective ($M = 3.44$) and that addressing impulsive behavior while keeping class focused was difficult ($M = 3.33$). Emotional self-regulation challenges were rated as Agree ($M = 3.22$). The overall weighted mean was 3.40, interpreted as strong agreement.

Table 6. *Challenges in Implementing Classroom Management Strategies*

Statement	Mean	Verbal Description
1. Balancing the needs of learners with ADHD with other students in the classroom is often challenging.	3.44	Strongly Agree
2. Maintaining an organized learning environment is difficult due to learners with ADHD's struggles with organization.	3.44	Strongly Agree
3. Allowing learners with ADHD to take breaks or move around can disrupt the classroom routine.	3.56	Strongly Agree
4. Collaborating effectively with parents and support staff regarding learners with ADHD can be time-consuming.	3.13	Agree
5. Allowing breaks and movement helps students with ADHD but may distract others.	3.33	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean	3.37	Strongly Agree

Table 6 displayed challenges related to classroom management strategies. Teachers strongly agreed that balancing the needs of learners with ADHD and other students ($M = 3.44$), maintaining an organized environment ($M = 3.44$), and managing breaks or movement that disrupted routines ($M = 3.56$) were challenging. Collaboration with parents and staff was rated Agree ($M = 3.13$). Allowing breaks and movement was rated Strongly Agree ($M = 3.33$). The overall weighted mean was 3.37, interpreted as strong agreement.

3.3 Relationships Between the Strategies Used and the Challenges Faced by the Teachers

Table 7. Correlation Between the Strategies and the Challenges

Strategies	Challenges		
	Instructional	Behavioral	Classroom Management
Instructional	0.413	-	-
Behavioral	-	0.576	-
Classroom Management	-	-	0.755

Note: Values represent Pearson correlation coefficients. “-” indicates no direct comparison between different domains.

Table 7 summarized the correlation between strategies and challenges. Instructional strategies were moderately correlated with instructional challenges ($r = .413$). Behavioral strategies were moderately correlated with behavioral challenges ($r = .576$). Classroom management strategies showed a strong positive correlation with classroom management challenges ($r = .755$).

3.4 Proposed Action Plan to Enhance the Attention Span of Learners with ADHD

Table 8. Action Plan Proposed for the Enhancement of Attention Span in Learners with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Component	Details
Program Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop/program on understanding ADHD and strategies to enhance attention span Training teachers to create ADHD-friendly classroom settings Conducting interactive and engaging sessions using visual aids, short tasks, and movement-based activities
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve the focus and classroom participation of students with ADHD To enhance the learning experience of students with ADHD through engaging and adaptive strategies To equip teachers with knowledge and skills in addressing the needs of learners with ADHD
Tasks	Students will participate in games, group work, and hands-on activities
Persons Involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special Education Teachers Students with ADHD Parents/Guardians of students with ADHD
Criteria for Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student participation and engagement Observable improvement and progress Completion of assigned tasks
Time Frame	Academic Year 2025–2026

Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual aids • Rewards/incentives
Expected Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students with ADHD will become more active and focused in class • Parents will observe improvements in their children's learning • Students with ADHD will gradually function more independently in academic tasks and activities

Table 8 presented the proposed action plan for enhancing attention span in learners with ADHD. The plan included program activities such as teacher workshops, training sessions, and interactive tasks. Objectives focused on improving participation, enhancing learning experiences, and equipping teachers with adaptive skills. Tasks, persons involved, criteria for evaluation, timeframe, resources, and expected outcomes were outlined systematically.

4 Discussion

Teaching Strategies Used by Special Education Teachers

This study found that teachers employed a range of instructional, behavioral, and classroom management strategies to enhance the attention span of learners with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Instructional approaches such as clear routines, structured lessons, and positive reinforcement were consistently applied, reflecting their effectiveness in sustaining student engagement. These findings are consistent with earlier research emphasizing the importance of predictable structures and reinforcement in supporting learners with ADHD (Barkley, 2015; DuPaul & Stoner, 2014). By simplifying tasks and using visual aids, teachers created learning environments that were more accessible and manageable for students.

Behavioral strategies, particularly the use of immediate feedback and reinforcement schedules, were reported as highly effective in addressing impulsivity and maintaining focus. These practices align with prior studies highlighting the role of positive reinforcement in reducing disruptive behavior and improving task completion among students with ADHD (Fabiano et al., 2009). In addition, setting clear behavioral expectations and redirecting off-task behavior proved essential in maintaining lesson flow.

Classroom management strategies, including preparing materials in advance, structuring the physical classroom, and fostering respect, were likewise crucial. Such practices supported not only classroom order but also inclusivity. Previous research also indicated that environmental structuring and a supportive classroom climate are key to improving outcomes for learners with ADHD (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013).

Challenges in Implementing Strategies

Despite the use of effective strategies, teachers reported notable challenges. In terms of instruction, differentiating lessons to meet diverse needs, lack of specialized training, and limited time for individualized support hindered implementation. Similar concerns were

raised in studies pointing to inadequate professional preparation and resource constraints as barriers to effective ADHD instruction (Owens et al., 2017).

Behavioral challenges included impulsive actions, emotional dysregulation, and difficulty sustaining engagement throughout lessons. Teachers also reported that traditional discipline methods were ineffective. These findings suggest that ADHD requires tailored interventions rather than generic classroom management techniques. Consistent with previous research, reliance on conventional discipline often exacerbates rather than resolves behavioral issues (Fabiano et al., 2009).

Classroom management difficulties revolved around balancing the needs of ADHD learners with those of other students, disruptions caused by frequent movement breaks, and limited collaboration with parents or support staff. Maintaining an organized environment was particularly challenging due to the learners' struggles with organization. This confirms earlier findings that teacher-parent collaboration is critical but often underutilized in supporting ADHD learners (Power et al., 2012).

Relationships Between Strategies and Challenges

Statistical analysis revealed significant correlations between strategies and challenges. Instructional challenges were moderately correlated with the use of instructional strategies, suggesting that teachers responded to increased instructional difficulties by applying more targeted methods. Similarly, a moderate to strong correlation between behavioral challenges and strategies indicated that greater behavioral difficulties prompted the use of behavior-specific interventions. The strongest correlation was observed between classroom management challenges and strategies, implying that teachers intensified their management practices as classroom difficulties increased. These relationships highlight the adaptive nature of teaching practices, wherein challenges directly shape instructional and management responses.

Contributions, Limitations, and Implications

This study contributes to the growing body of literature by documenting the specific strategies and challenges experienced by teachers in inclusive classrooms in Cabanatuan City. Its findings reinforce the importance of structured instruction, positive reinforcement, and adaptive management practices (Barkley, 2015; DuPaul & Stoner, 2014), while also underscoring systemic barriers such as lack of training and resources (Owens et al., 2017).

However, the study was limited to three schools and relied primarily on self-reported data, which may have introduced response bias. Future research may include classroom observations and longitudinal designs to validate these findings and capture changes over time.

The results imply that ongoing professional development in ADHD-specific strategies is essential. Schools should provide teachers with training, resources, and collaborative opportunities with parents and specialists (Power et al., 2012). Tailored interventions that integrate instructional, behavioral, and classroom management strategies can foster an inclusive and supportive environment, ultimately enhancing the academic and social development of learners with ADHD.

4 Conclusions

This study examined the strategies used by teachers to enhance the attention span of learners with ADHD, the challenges encountered in their implementation, and the relationships between strategies and challenges. The findings showed that teachers employed varied instructional, behavioral, and classroom management strategies such as the use of visual aids, interactive methods, positive reinforcement, and structured routines (Barkley, 2015; DuPaul & Stoner, 2014). Teachers adapted their approaches to address the specific needs of learners with ADHD.

Despite these efforts, challenges persisted. Teachers reported difficulties in differentiating instruction, limited training in ADHD-specific methods, frequent behavioral disruptions, and constraints in balancing class needs with individualized support (Owens et al., 2017). These challenges limited the consistent application of strategies and underscored the need for institutional support.

The study also revealed significant positive correlations between strategies and challenges, with the strongest relationship observed in classroom management. This indicated that as challenges increased, teachers responded by intensifying their strategies. However, the effectiveness of these responses was influenced by resource limitations, time demands, and professional preparation (APA, 2013; Fabiano et al., 2009).

The action plan developed from the findings provides practical steps to support both teachers and learners, emphasizing workshops, ADHD-friendly classroom practices, and collaboration with parents and specialists (Power et al., 2012). The study highlights the importance of sustained teacher training and institutional support to create inclusive environments where learners with ADHD can thrive. Future research may expand to larger samples, include classroom observations, and examine long-term outcomes of interventions to strengthen evidence on effective practices.

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