

## Emotional Challenges and Strategies of SPED Teachers in Addressing Dyslexic Learners

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**Abstract.** This study examined the emotional challenges experienced by Special Education teachers in addressing the unique educational needs of learners with dyslexia. Using a qualitative design, data were gathered from teachers through interviews and thematic analysis to identify stressors, coping mechanisms, and support needs. Results revealed that teachers encountered significant emotional difficulties, including burnout, frustration, self-doubt, and emotional exhaustion, which were primarily linked to high workloads, insufficient institutional support, and limited training specific to dyslexia. Despite these pressures, teachers demonstrated resilience and applied effective strategies such as multisensory instruction, individualized approaches, and collaboration with parents and colleagues to support student learning. The study further highlighted the pressing need for targeted professional development, workload management, and institutional reforms to safeguard teachers' well-being and sustain their instructional effectiveness. An action plan was developed to strengthen professional support, enhance leadership mentorship, and inform policy directions aimed at fostering inclusive and responsive educational practices. Overall, the findings affirm that sustaining teacher effectiveness in supporting learners with dyslexia requires comprehensive and holistic support systems that address both instructional demands and emotional well-being.

**Keywords:** Burnout; Dyslexia; Resilience; Stressor; Professional Development

### 1 Introduction

Special Education (SPED) teachers play a vital role in addressing the diverse needs of learners, particularly those with specific learning disabilities such as dyslexia. Dyslexia, a neurodevelopmental disorder affecting approximately 5–10% of the population, is characterized by persistent difficulties in reading, writing, and spelling despite average or above-average intelligence (Wagner et al., 2020). Learners with dyslexia often encounter academic and social challenges, making early intervention and tailored instructional strategies crucial for fostering academic achievement and self-confidence (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2021).

The profession of teaching, especially in special education, requires more than technical expertise. It demands emotional resilience and adaptability as teachers not only address the literacy difficulties of dyslexic students but also provide psychological and emotional support. By helping learners manage frustration, anxiety, and issues of self-esteem, SPED teachers contribute to both cognitive and emotional development (Siegel, 2019). However, the emotional toll placed on these teachers is frequently underestimated. Balancing instructional responsibilities, administrative duties, and the individualized needs of students can result in burnout, frustration, and emotional fatigue (Smith & Brown, 2022).

Much of the existing research emphasizes instructional methods for dyslexic learners, yet little attention is given to the emotional and psychological challenges faced by the teachers

themselves. Many report feelings of isolation, insufficient institutional support, and a lack of specialized training, which exacerbate stress and lower job satisfaction (Johnson et al., 2021; Garcia & White, 2023). This gap in scholarship highlights the need to examine not only how teachers manage the academic needs of students with dyslexia but also how they cope with their own emotional well-being.

Understanding the emotional experiences of SPED teachers is essential for developing supportive professional environments that enhance teacher resilience and instructional quality. Doing so benefits both educators and learners by sustaining teacher effectiveness and promoting inclusive education (Miller et al., 2023).

This study therefore aims to explore the emotional challenges experienced by SPED teachers in teaching students with dyslexia, examine how these challenges affect their professional performance and well-being, identify strategies they employ to support learners, and propose components of an action plan to strengthen institutional and professional support systems.

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research method with a descriptive design to explore the emotional challenges and strategies of Special Education teachers in supporting dyslexic learners. A qualitative approach was appropriate because it focused on teachers' lived experiences, perspectives, and emotions, enabling them to share their insights in their own words. The descriptive design allowed for a detailed account of the emotional challenges encountered by teachers and the strategies they employed. This approach provided an in-depth understanding of the realities faced by Special Education teachers and highlighted their efforts to address the needs of dyslexic learners.

### 2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted at Lazaro Francisco Integrated School, located in Vijandre, Cabanatuan City. The school is recognized for its inclusive education program and commitment to learners with special needs. It offers a Special Education program that supports children with various learning challenges, including dyslexia. Lazaro Francisco Integrated School was chosen because it provides a supportive environment where teachers work directly with dyslexic learners, making it an appropriate setting for exploring teachers' emotional experiences and strategies.

### 2.3 Participants and Sampling Procedure

The participants consisted of 6–10 licensed Special Education teachers with at least two years of experience teaching dyslexic learners. Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, was employed to select participants who met the inclusion criteria. Teachers were recruited through outreach to Special Education programs in local schools. Invitation letters were distributed to potential participants, outlining the study's purpose, scope, and ethical safeguards. Teachers who confirmed their eligibility and willingness to participate were included in the study. This sample size was considered adequate for thematic analysis, as it allowed for rich, detailed data while remaining manageable for in-depth qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

### 2.4 Research Instrument

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary instrument for data collection. A researcher-developed interview guide was created to explore teachers' emotional challenges and strategies in supporting dyslexic learners. The guide included open-ended questions that encouraged participants to describe their experiences, coping strategies, and reflections.

The interview guide was validated by two Special Education teachers from Talavera and a language expert from the College of Education specializing in Language Studies. Revisions were made based on their recommendations to improve clarity, relevance, and appropriateness. The final validated instrument ensured that questions captured authentic experiences while maintaining academic rigor.

### *2.5 Data Gathering Procedure*

Interviews were conducted with participating Special Education teachers who met the inclusion criteria. Before the interviews, informed consent was obtained to ensure voluntary participation and to safeguard ethical considerations such as confidentiality. Each interview was conducted in a quiet, comfortable space within the school to provide a secure environment for participants to share their experiences.

Open-ended questions guided the interviews, focusing on teachers' perceptions of emotional challenges, strategies for supporting dyslexic learners, and suggestions for improving institutional support. With participants' permission, the interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim for analysis. This method allowed for a comprehensive exploration of individual experiences and the identification of common patterns across participants.

### *2.6 Data Analysis*

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis approach. First, the researchers familiarized themselves with the data by repeatedly reading the interview transcripts. Second, initial codes were generated by systematically identifying relevant text segments related to emotional challenges and strategies. Third, the codes were organized into potential themes, reflecting recurring patterns. Fourth, the themes were reviewed to ensure coherence and alignment with the data. Fifth, themes were clearly defined and named to capture their essence. Finally, the themes were synthesized into a cohesive narrative that addressed the research questions. This systematic process ensured a rigorous and transparent analysis of the data.

### *Trustworthiness*

The trustworthiness of the study was established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was achieved by triangulating sources, validating responses through participant review, and conducting follow-up interviews for clarification. Transferability was supported by providing detailed descriptions of the research context, participant selection criteria, and study setting. Dependability was ensured through thorough documentation of each step in the research process, enabling replication in similar contexts. Confirmability was maintained by basing findings on participants' responses and cross-checking codes among the research team to minimize bias.

### *Reflexivity*

The researchers acknowledged their positions as pre-service Special Needs Education students, recognizing that their perspectives could influence data interpretation. To mitigate bias, the researchers engaged in reflective discussions throughout the study and maintained awareness of their assumptions. Efforts were made to create a respectful interview environment where participants felt safe to share their experiences. Reflexivity ensured that the voices of the participants remained central to the findings.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Ethical guidelines were strictly observed throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from teachers, parents, the school principal, and, where appropriate, dyslexic learners. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage.

without penalty. Confidentiality was maintained by protecting participants' identities and storing data securely. Care was taken to minimize any potential harm or discomfort. Findings were reported honestly and with the intention of improving educational practices for dyslexic learners and supporting the well-being of Special Education teachers.

### 3 Results

Figure 1 illustrates the balance of emotional experiences reported by SPED teachers. Emotional strain and frustration were frequent and rooted in systemic challenges, whereas fulfillment arose from student progress and positive reframing. Across themes, parental involvement, collegial support, and observable student improvement consistently shaped emotional outcomes.

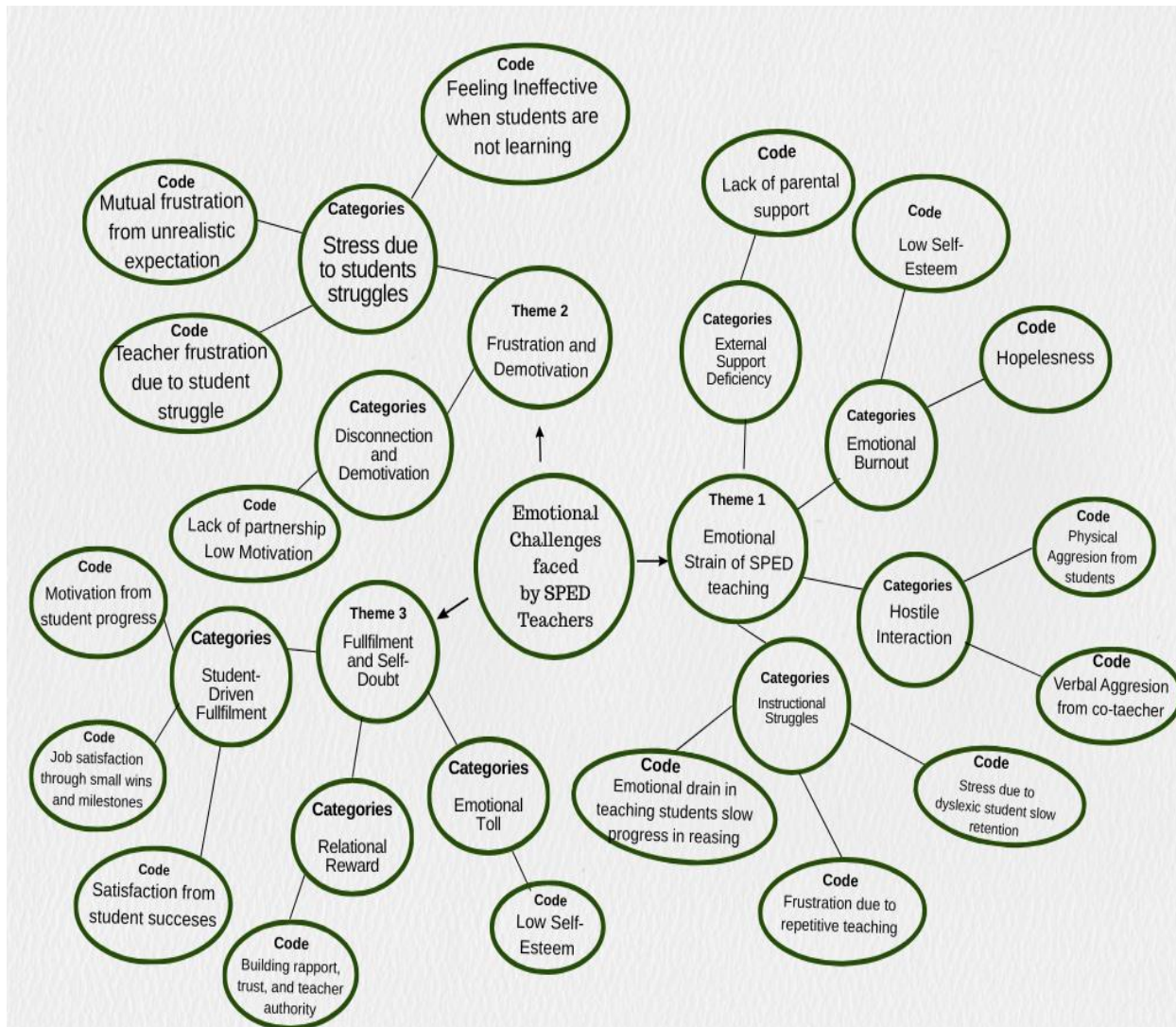


Figure 1. Emotional challenges faced by SPED teachers

#### Emergent Theme 1: Emotional Strain of SPED Teaching

Participants consistently reported emotional strain caused by student slow progress, aggression, lack of parental support, and negative collegial interactions. Teachers described feeling drained, overwhelmed, and hopeless when supporting learners with dyslexia.

**Table 1.** Coded Sources of Emotional Strain among SPED Teachers

Code	Frequency	Sample Evidence
Student's slow progress	High	Difficulty retaining basic reading skills
Aggression from students	Moderate	Physical or verbal harm directed at teachers
Lack of parental support	High	Parents uncooperative in intervention efforts
Repetitive teaching fatigue	High	Constant reteaching without evident student progress
Verbal aggression from peers	Moderate	Negative comments or accusations from colleagues

Teachers recounted emotionally draining experiences. For example, one respondent described encountering a severe case of dyslexia as “emotionally challenging” and expressed questioning their purpose. Another shared that physical aggression from students, combined with uncooperative parents, left them drained and unsupported. A third respondent reported stress from being falsely accused by a colleague, indicating strain also arose from poor workplace dynamics.

### **Emergent Theme 2:** Frustration and Demotivation

SPED teachers frequently described frustration resulting from unrealistic expectations, insufficient family involvement, and strained collegial relationships. Feelings of ineffectiveness were particularly evident when repeated teaching did not yield noticeable student improvement.

**Table 2.** Coded Sources of Frustration and Demotivation

Code	Frequency	Sample Evidence
Mutual frustration	High	Both teacher and student feel frustrated by struggles
Lack of parental support	High	Parents not engaged in interventions
Peer discouragement	Moderate	Negative remarks from colleagues
Repetitive failure	High	Instruction repeated without observable results
Perceived ineffectiveness	High	Teachers feeling unproductive when students fail

Teachers highlighted how forcing struggling students led to shared frustration, weakening morale. They also noted that lack of partnership with parents diminished motivation. Negative

interactions with colleagues further reduced focus and energy. Repeated teaching without improvement left teachers feeling ineffective and demotivated.

### Emergent Theme 3: Fulfillment and Self-Doubt

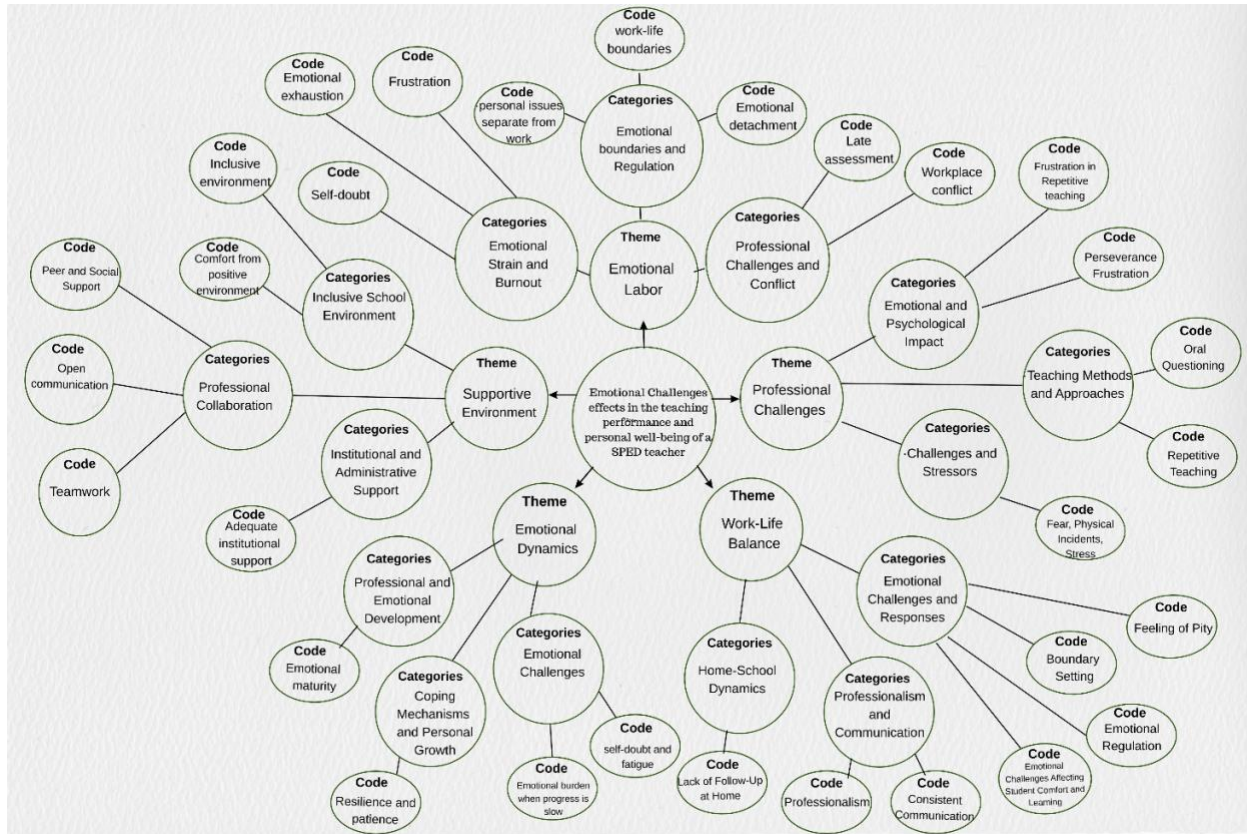
Despite challenges, participants also reported fulfillment from student progress, even when improvements were small. These positive experiences reinforced professional identity and motivation. However, moments of discouragement and self-doubt persisted, especially when expectations were unmet or when teachers felt unsupported.

**Table 3.** Coded Experiences of Fulfillment and Self-Doubt

Code	Frequency	Sample Evidence
Motivation from progress	High	Student milestones seen as rewarding
Job satisfaction	High	Small successes viewed as evidence of effectiveness
Positive reframing	Moderate	Teachers chose to focus on slow but steady gains
Low self-esteem	Moderate	Teachers reported losing motivation and confidence

One teacher described witnessing a child's milestone as "a sense of fulfillment," while another highlighted how even simple student achievements affirmed teaching effectiveness. Teachers also acknowledged intentionally reframing slow progress as motivation. Conversely, others admitted to losing motivation and self-esteem when facing ongoing challenges, describing feelings that "everyone was against them."

Figure 2 yields five emergent themes: (1) emotional labor, (2) professional challenges, (3) work-life balance, (4) supportive environment, and (5) emotional dynamics. The themes were derived from recurring codes in participant responses and supported by direct quotations.



**Figure 2.** Effects of emotional challenges in the teaching performance and personal well-being of a SPED teacher

**Emergent Theme 1: Emotional Labor**

Special education teachers described the need to regulate emotions by separating their personal and professional roles. Codes included role separation, frustration, self-doubt, emotional detachment, workplace conflict, late assessment, and blame confusion.

**Table 4.** Coded Sources of Emotional Labor Among SPED Teachers

Code	Frequency	Sample Evidence
Role separation	High	“I completely separate my personal life from my work.”
Emotional detachment	Moderate	Limiting personal feelings during professional duties
Frustration	High	Challenges when colleagues or parents miss expectations
Self-doubt	Moderate	Teachers questioned their effectiveness
Workplace conflict	Moderate	Misunderstandings with colleagues
Blame confusion	Low	Unclear accountability in late assessments

Teachers emphasized deliberate efforts to prevent work-related stress from spilling into personal life. Respondents described frustration and self-doubt when colleagues or parents did not meet responsibilities, sometimes leading to conflict and confusion about accountability.

### Emergent Theme 2: Professional Challenges

Participants reported that repetitive teaching, slow student progress, and occasional physical incidents heightened stress and frustration. Despite these difficulties, perseverance and resilience were also evident.

**Table 5.** Coded Sources of Professional Challenges

Code	Frequency	Sample Evidence
Repetitive teaching	High	"Teaching today, but the next day it's back to the start."
Teacher frustration	High	Emotional fatigue due to repeated lessons
Physical incidents	Low	Students pulling hair or causing harm
Stress and fear	Moderate	Anxiety after experiencing physical aggression
Perseverance	High	Continued teaching despite limited progress

Respondents described slow progress as emotionally draining and physically exhausting. Physical incidents created fear of recurrence. Nevertheless, participants highlighted perseverance, stating they continued teaching because of a strong sense of responsibility to their students.

### Emergent Theme 3: Work-Life Balance

Teachers discussed balancing emotions with professionalism, especially when parental disengagement limited student follow-up at home. Codes included boundary setting, emotional regulation, professionalism, coping mechanisms, and the impact of teacher emotions on students.

**Table 6.** Coded Sources of Work-Life Balance

Code	Frequency	Sample Evidence
Lack of parental support	High	"Parents leave everything to us despite needs."
Emotional regulation	High	Efforts to prevent personal emotions from affecting work
Professionalism	High	Avoiding negative emotions in communication
Boundary setting	Moderate	Clear separation of personal and work identities
Emotional spillover	Moderate	Students reacting negatively to teacher emotions

Teachers reported difficulty when parents failed to reinforce learning at home. They stressed the importance of professionalism and emotional regulation, noting that negative emotions could affect student comfort and listening in class.

#### **Emergent Theme 4: Supportive Environment**

Respondents identified collegial and institutional support as critical in sustaining resilience. Codes included inclusive culture, open communication, mentoring, and collaboration.

**Table 7.** Coded Sources of Supportive Environment

Code	Frequency	Sample Evidence
Inclusive culture	High	"Our school supports inclusive education."
Open communication	High	"We hold sessions to voice out struggles."
Collegial support	Moderate	Teachers sharing teaching concerns
Mentoring opportunities	Moderate	Teachers mentoring peers

Teachers reported that inclusive school practices reduced stigma for dyslexic learners, making integration easier. Open communication sessions provided emotional outlets and encouraged collaborative problem-solving.

#### **Emergent Theme 5: Emotional Dynamics**

Participants described resilience, patience, temporary self-doubt, and coping strategies that shaped their emotional journeys. Codes included emotional maturity, coping mechanisms, and emotional burden.

**Table 8.** Coded Sources of Emotional Dynamics

Code	Frequency	Sample Evidence
Resilience	High	"You really have to be brave and patient."
Emotional maturity	Moderate	Avoiding personal spillover into teaching duties
Coping strategies	High	Personal approaches to manage stress
Temporary self-doubt	Moderate	Periods of low confidence and fatigue
Emotional burden	High	Stress from slow progress and setbacks

Teachers described how coping strategies and resilience helped them overcome challenges, even when experiencing fatigue or self-doubt. They reported that emotional struggles often became opportunities for growth and professional reflection.

Across the five themes, participants emphasized constant emotional regulation, professional perseverance despite setbacks, and the necessity of supportive environments. Figure 3 summarizes the interplay of strain and resilience in the experiences of SPED teachers handling dyslexic learners.

Figure below presents strategies commonly used by SPED Teachers to support the learning and development of students with dyslexia

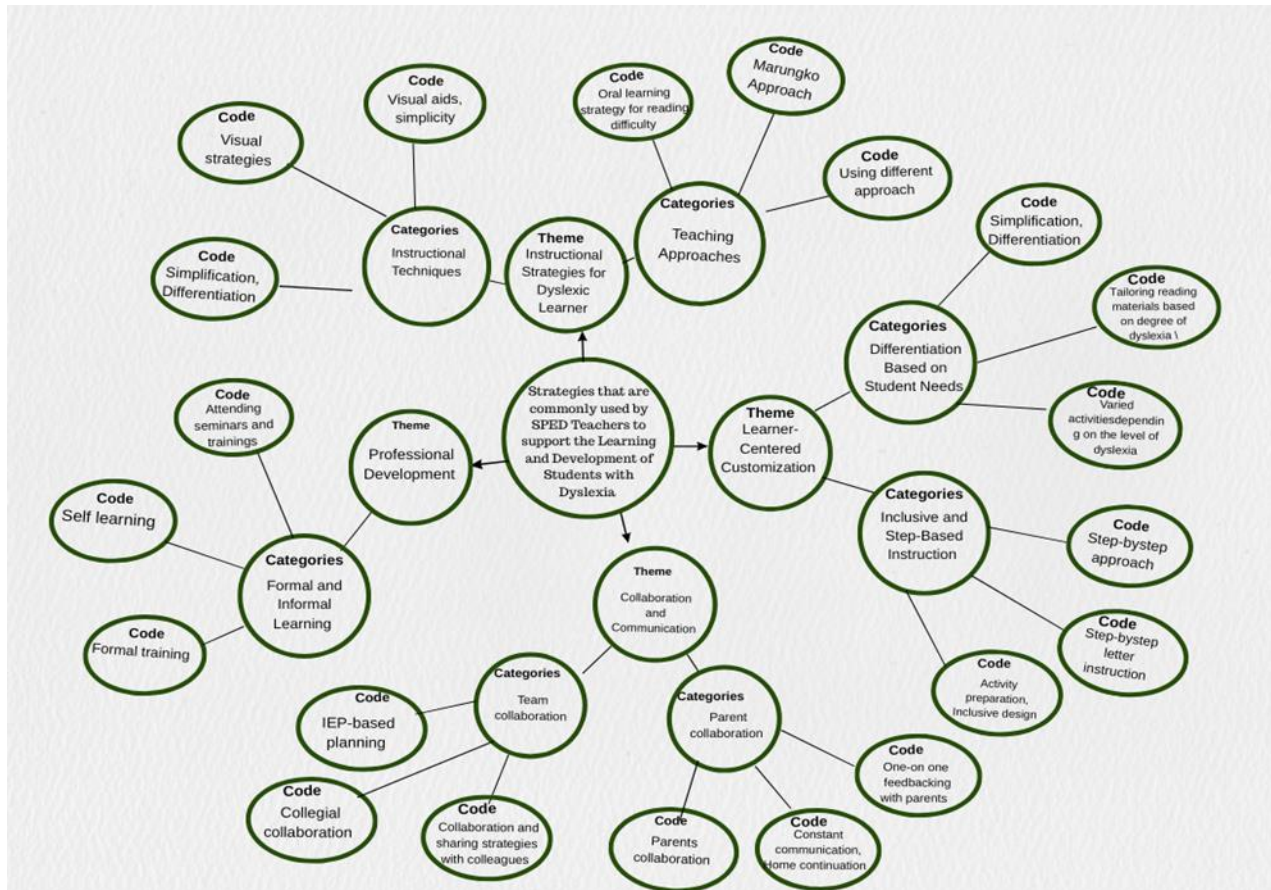


Figure 3. Strategies commonly of SPED teachers to support the Learning and Development of students with Dyslexia

The findings were organized into four emergent themes: (1) Instructional Strategies for Dyslexic Learners, (2) Learner-Centered Customization, (3) Collaboration and Communication, and (4) Professional Development. Each theme was supported by coded responses from SPED teachers and reinforced with illustrative excerpts. Tables and figures summarize the key codes and frequencies.

### Emergent Theme 1: Instructional Strategies for Dyslexic Learners

Analysis revealed that teachers employed various instructional strategies to address reading difficulties, including the Marungko Approach, visual aids, simplified materials, oral learning, and instructional adaptation. These strategies emphasized the importance of multisensory and flexible methods.

**Table 9.** Instructional Strategies Used for Dyslexic Learners (N = 6)

Code/Strategy	Frequency	Representative Example
Marungko Approach	3	Phonics-based letter-sound recognition before words
Visual aids/visual strategy	4	Use of pictures and charts to aid comprehension
Simplicity in materials	3	Use of simplified words and short sentences
Oral learning strategy	2	Verbal repetition and auditory cues
Instructional adaptation	3	Adjusting methods based on student response

Table 9 illustrates the proportion of strategies used by participants, highlighting visual aids and the Marungko Approach as the most frequent.

### **Emergent Theme 2:** Learner-Centered Customization

Teachers reported customizing instruction based on the severity of dyslexia. Differentiated tasks, step-by-step lessons, and leveled reading materials were consistently described.

**Table 10.** Learner-Centered Customization Practices (N = 6)

Code/Practice	Frequency	Description
Differentiation by severity	4	Adjusting tasks based on dyslexia level
Step-by-step instruction	3	Sequencing from vowels to syllables to words
Tailored reading materials	3	Matching texts to reading ability
Inclusive design	2	Ensuring accessibility for all students
Activity preparation	2	Preparing scaffolded and structured activities

Trends showed that teachers scaffolded lessons gradually and emphasized mastery of basic literacy skills before progressing to more advanced tasks.

### **Emergent Theme 3:** Collaboration and Communication

Teachers highlighted the importance of communication with parents and colleagues. Strategies included consistent parent feedback, IEP-based planning, and collegial sharing of strategies.

**Table 11.** Collaboration and Communication Practices (N = 6)

Code/Practice	Frequency	Example Practice
Parent feedback/monitoring	4	Post-session updates, feedback time
Constant communication	3	Text updates, regular conferences
Home continuation	2	Encouraging parental follow-up learning at home
Collegial collaboration	3	Strategy-sharing with peers
IEP-based planning	2	Using individualized goals in planning

Teachers consistently noted challenges when parental support was inconsistent, while collegial collaboration provided an avenue for professional sharing and support.

#### **Emergent Theme 4:** Professional Development

Participants reported both formal and informal professional development efforts. While they attended general SPED seminars, they identified a need for more dyslexia-specific training. Some relied on self-learning through independent study and resource gathering.

**Table 12.** Professional Development Activities (N = 6)

Code/Activity	Frequency	Description
Attending seminars/trainings	4	Formal workshops on general SPED topics
Dyslexia-specific training	2	Request for targeted dyslexia-focused programs
Self-learning	3	Independent study of techniques and strategies

Trends revealed that although teachers engaged in continuous professional learning, there was a strong demand for dyslexia-specific training opportunities.

The findings revealed five emergent themes drawn from the responses of Special Education (SPED) teachers regarding their experiences in teaching learners with dyslexia. These themes captured both instructional practices and emotional challenges, highlighting the interconnections between professional growth, resilience, and support systems.



**Table 13.** Educational Equity through Tailored Instruction and Growth

Codes	Exemplar Quotes
Task analysis, Visuals, Simplicity	"We really use instructional materials suited for them... step-by-step procedure... simple wording... every step with pictures." (Respondent 2)
Focused training, SPED-specific training	"If it's dyslexia, then only dyslexia should be studied... there should be specific training for specific disabilities." (Respondent 1)
Importance of seminars	"Our trainings are for all disabilities as a whole... I hope there would be one just for dyslexia." (Respondent 4)

**Emergent Theme 2: Fostering Resilience through Support and Growth**

Teachers reported frequent stress and emotional fatigue, particularly after intensive activities such as IEP meetings. They emphasized the need for structured recovery time, flexible scheduling, and wellness programs to support resilience. Team-building activities and peer support were also cited as valuable in alleviating stress and strengthening collegial bonds.

**Table 14.** Fostering Resilience through Support and Growth

Codes	Exemplar Quotes
Flexible scheduling, Breaks	"It would be a big help to have planning breaks or flexi-time after big events." (Respondent 2)
Stress relief, Team building	"We had team-building activities during seminars." (Respondent 2)
Peer support, Recovery time	"Structured opportunities for rest and decompression helped our mental state." (Respondent 2)

**Emergent Theme 3: Empowerment through Leadership and Mentorship**

Teachers identified leadership and mentorship as critical sources of professional growth. Principals who shared effective strategies eased instructional burdens, while collaborative peer mentorship fostered confidence and competence. The presence of supportive leaders and colleagues enhanced both instructional quality and emotional well-being.

**Table 15.** Empowerment through Leadership and Mentorship

Codes	Exemplar Quotes
Leadership support	"Our principal has encountered many strategies... and shares them with us—it really lightens our emotional load." (Respondent 1)
Mentorship, Guidance	"We benefited from the ongoing exchange of teaching strategies and encouragement from colleagues." (Respondent 3)
Collaborative culture	"Shared ideas and practices fostered confidence and reduced emotional stress." (Respondent 4)

**Emergent Theme 4:** Managing Workload and Preventing Burnout

Teachers reported excessive workloads, with class sizes far exceeding policy guidelines. This imbalance resulted in emotional exhaustion and reduced teaching effectiveness. Participants stressed that manageable class sizes were essential for sustaining both quality instruction and teacher well-being.

**Table 16.** Managing Workload and Preventing Burnout

Codes	Exemplar Quotes
Overload, Imbalance	"The memorandum states 7–10 students per SPED teacher, but I handle 33." (Respondent 1)
Emotional exhaustion	"It's emotionally draining... class sizes should be manageable." (Respondent 2)
Manageable ratio	"Maybe it would be better if each teacher only had ten students." (Respondent 3)

**Emergent Theme 5:** Enhancing Teacher Well-being through Communication and Collaboration

Teachers emphasized that well-being was closely tied to mental health support and collaboration with parents. They identified the need for seminars focused on teacher mental health and highlighted that parent awareness and cooperation increased motivation and teaching effectiveness.

**Table 17.** Enhancing Teacher Well-being through Communication and Collaboration

Codes	Exemplar Quotes
Teacher mental health	"It would be good to have seminars not just about strategies but also about teachers' mental health." (Respondent 6)
Parent collaboration	"Parent awareness is really important... when they cooperate, we are more motivated to teach." (Respondent 5)
Stakeholder engagement	"Collaboration with parents fostered both motivation and resilience." (Respondent 5)

## 4 Discussion

### A. Emotional Challenges Faced by SPED Teachers

This study examined the emotional experiences of SPED teachers handling dyslexic learners, focusing on the sources of emotional strain, frustration, fulfillment, and self-doubt. The findings revealed that emotional strain and frustration were frequent and rooted in systemic challenges such as student slow progress, aggression, limited parental involvement, and negative collegial interactions. At the same time, fulfillment arose from observable student progress and positive reframing, indicating that teachers' emotional outcomes were shaped by both barriers and supports.

#### *Emotional Strain of SPED Teaching*

The results showed that SPED teachers consistently experienced emotional strain due to slow student progress, aggressive behaviors, lack of parental support, and discouraging workplace dynamics. These findings align with Montgomery and Rupp (2005), who emphasized that persistent student-related stress contributes significantly to emotional exhaustion among SPED teachers. Similarly, Brunsting, Sreckovic, and Lane (2014) highlighted how the absence of systemic support exacerbates burnout risks. In this study, emotional strain was not limited to classroom challenges but extended to negative collegial relationships, reflecting the multidimensional nature of stress in SPED settings.

The implication of these findings is that emotional strain among SPED teachers is both structural and relational, requiring interventions beyond the classroom. Addressing student aggression and enhancing parental engagement may reduce direct stressors, while fostering collegial respect could improve workplace climate. However, the study was limited by its reliance on self-reported accounts, which may reflect subjective perceptions rather than objective conditions.

#### *Frustration and Demotivation*

Participants frequently described frustration and demotivation arising from unrealistic expectations, insufficient family involvement, and repetitive teaching without observable progress. These outcomes parallel findings by Billingsley (2004), who argued that inadequate family partnerships contribute to teacher attrition. The sense of ineffectiveness reported by participants also resonates with Maslach and Leiter's (1997) burnout model, where repeated failure to achieve goals intensifies emotional exhaustion.

These findings suggest that demotivation among SPED teachers is not a personal deficit but a systemic issue that undermines professional confidence. Schools must therefore prioritize family engagement initiatives and provide practical resources for differentiating instruction in dyslexia-specific contexts. Without such support, teachers risk internalizing systemic barriers as personal failures, contributing to further attrition.

#### *Fulfillment and Self-Doubt*

Despite the challenges, teachers reported fulfillment from student progress, even when improvements were small. These moments reinforced professional identity and motivation, echoing Jennings and Greenberg's (2015) assertion that emotionally competent teachers derive satisfaction from student growth. Teachers also reframed slow progress as positive, suggesting that resilience and reflective practice functioned as protective factors.

At the same time, feelings of self-doubt emerged when expectations were unmet or when support systems were lacking. These results parallel the findings of Day and Leithwood (2007), who observed that teacher self-efficacy fluctuates depending on institutional and collegial backing. The coexistence of fulfillment and discouragement underscores the dynamic and fragile balance of teacher motivation in SPED contexts.

### *Contributions, Implications, and Recommendations*

This study contributes to the literature by highlighting the interplay of systemic, relational, and personal factors shaping the emotional experiences of SPED teachers of dyslexic learners. Unlike prior studies that primarily emphasized burnout, this research illustrates the duality of teaching experiences—strain and fulfillment coexisted and were often mediated by external supports such as parental involvement and collegial collaboration.

The implications are clear: teacher well-being is directly linked to student outcomes. Institutional policies that strengthen parental partnerships, enforce manageable workloads, and promote collegial respect are critical. Professional development should not only focus on instructional strategies but also incorporate teacher wellness, reflective practice, and resilience-building.

Future research may benefit from including multiple data sources, such as parent or administrator perspectives, to triangulate findings and reduce reliance on self-reports. Longitudinal studies could also examine how teachers' emotional trajectories evolve across different stages of their careers.

## **B. Effects of Emotional Challenges among SPED Teachers**

This part of study yielded five emergent themes: (1) emotional labor, (2) professional challenges, (3) work-life balance, (4) supportive environment, and (5) emotional dynamics. These themes were derived from recurring participant responses and highlight the multifaceted nature of teaching learners with dyslexia. The findings recall both strain and resilience, offering insights into the emotional landscape of special education (SPED) teachers.

### *Emotional Labor*

Participants consistently emphasized the need to regulate emotions by separating personal and professional roles. They described engaging in role separation, emotional detachment, and boundary setting to prevent work-related stress from encroaching on personal life. Teachers also expressed frustration and self-doubt when colleagues or parents failed to meet responsibilities, sometimes resulting in workplace conflict and confusion over accountability. These findings echo prior research indicating that SPED teachers engage in heightened “emotional labor” as part of their professional identity (Hastings & Brown, 2002; Sutton, 2004). Such regulation is necessary but can become burdensome when institutional and familial support are lacking.

### *Professional Challenges*

Teachers reported that repetitive teaching, slow student progress, and occasional physical incidents contributed to emotional fatigue and stress. Some participants described slow progress as emotionally draining, while incidents of student aggression created anxiety. At the same time, perseverance emerged as a strong counterbalance, with teachers continuing instruction despite limited visible improvement. This pattern is consistent with previous studies showing that SPED teachers often rely on resilience and a sense of professional responsibility to sustain their practice (Brunsting et al., 2014). The findings contribute by highlighting how dyslexia-specific challenges—such as repeated reteaching of foundational literacy skills—uniquely intensify stress while also fostering persistence.

### *Work-Life Balance*

Balancing professionalism with personal well-being emerged as another key theme. Teachers described difficulty when parents failed to reinforce learning at home, which they felt undermined classroom efforts. They emphasized emotional regulation and professionalism, noting that

unregulated emotions could negatively affect student engagement and comfort. This supports existing literature on the interdependence of teacher emotions and student outcomes (Chang, 2009). The findings suggest that work-life balance in SPED is not simply a matter of time management but also of emotional containment, where professional boundaries must be consciously maintained.

#### *Supportive Environment*

Participants highlighted the critical role of collegial and institutional support in sustaining resilience. Inclusive practices, open communication, and mentoring opportunities were cited as protective factors against burnout. Teachers reported that inclusive school cultures reduced stigma for dyslexic learners, while structured communication sessions provided emotional outlets and opportunities for collaboration. These findings align with studies emphasizing the buffering role of supportive professional communities in SPED (Billingsley, 2004; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). They also underscore the need for systemic supports rather than reliance solely on individual coping.

#### *Emotional Dynamics*

Finally, participants described their emotional journeys as shaped by resilience, coping strategies, patience, and occasional self-doubt. Despite periods of fatigue and uncertainty, teachers framed challenges as opportunities for growth and professional reflection. This dynamic mirrors broader findings on teacher resilience, where emotional struggles are viewed not only as stressors but also as catalysts for personal and professional development (Day & Gu, 2014). The present study adds to this discourse by showing how SPED teachers of dyslexic learners specifically reframe emotional burdens into professional learning.

#### *Implications and Contributions*

Taken together, the five themes suggest that the experiences of SPED teachers are marked by a constant negotiation between strain and resilience. Emotional labor and professional challenges highlight the cost of insufficient systemic and parental support, while supportive environments and adaptive coping strategies serve as protective factors. The findings contribute to the literature by deepening understanding of how teaching students with dyslexia uniquely shapes the emotional lives of SPED teachers, extending prior work that has focused more broadly on special education stress and burnout.

#### *Limitations*

The study's findings should be interpreted with caution. The sample was limited in scope, and participants' accounts reflected subjective perceptions rather than observable outcomes. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the study does not capture changes in teacher experiences over time.

#### *Recommendations*

Future research may benefit from longitudinal designs to examine how teachers' emotional experiences evolve with sustained practice. Intervention studies could also assess the effectiveness of structured mentoring, resilience training, and family-school partnerships in mitigating strain. For practice, schools should strengthen parent engagement programs, institutionalize peer mentoring, and provide professional development in emotional regulation and resilience strategies.

### **C. Strategies Commonly Used by SPED Teachers**

This section explored the instructional practices and professional experiences of SPED teachers in teaching learners with dyslexia. The findings were organized into four emergent themes: (1) instructional strategies for dyslexic learners, (2) learner-centered customization, (3) collaboration and communication, and (4) professional development. These themes revealed how teachers

combined adaptive instruction with personal initiative and collaborative support, while also identifying gaps in dyslexia-specific training.

#### *Instructional Strategies for Dyslexic Learners*

Teachers reported using a range of strategies, including the Marungko Approach, visual aids, simplified materials, oral repetition, and instructional adaptation. Visual aids and the Marungko Approach emerged as the most frequently applied. These findings confirmed that teachers relied on multisensory and flexible methods to address decoding and comprehension challenges. Prior studies have emphasized the effectiveness of multisensory instruction for students with dyslexia (Birsh & Carreker, 2018; Snowling & Hulme, 2020). The consistency between this study and existing literature underscores the critical role of phonics-based and visually supported instruction in improving literacy outcomes. At the same time, the limited use of structured, research-based programs highlights a gap in resources and specialized training.

#### *Learner-Centered Customization*

Findings showed that teachers tailored lessons according to the severity of dyslexia, using differentiation, step-by-step scaffolding, and leveled reading materials. This learner-centered approach reflects the principles of individualized instruction, which are central to effective SPED practice (Tomlinson, 2017). The emphasis on scaffolding and mastery of basic literacy skills is consistent with previous research indicating that systematic progression fosters confidence and skill retention among learners with reading disabilities (Vaughn et al., 2019). By documenting specific classroom practices such as sequencing from vowels to syllables, this study contributes detailed evidence of how teachers adapt literacy instruction to dyslexic learners in resource-constrained contexts.

#### *Collaboration and Communication*

Teachers highlighted that communication with parents and colleagues was essential to supporting learner progress. They reported using parent feedback, home-based reinforcement, IEP-driven planning, and collegial collaboration to share strategies. However, challenges arose when parents were inconsistent in their support, which participants viewed as a significant barrier to progress. These findings echo earlier studies that emphasized the role of parent-teacher collaboration in sustaining literacy gains (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). At the same time, collegial sharing emerged as a professional lifeline, providing practical support and emotional reassurance. This suggests that collaboration is not only a pedagogical strategy but also a mechanism for teacher resilience.

#### *Professional Development*

Teachers engaged in seminars, trainings, and self-directed study but consistently expressed the need for dyslexia-specific training. While general SPED seminars provided foundational knowledge, participants emphasized that these did not adequately address the specialized instructional needs of dyslexic learners. This finding aligns with prior work highlighting gaps in teacher preparation for dyslexia (Washburn et al., 2011). It also demonstrates that teachers are motivated to pursue professional growth, even in the absence of formal opportunities, underscoring the importance of institutional investment in targeted capacity building.

#### *Contributions and Implications*

Taken together, the four themes illustrate how SPED teachers balance adaptive instruction, learner-centered customization, and collaboration to address the unique needs of dyslexic learners. The findings contribute to the literature by documenting how locally contextualized practices, such as the Marungko Approach, supplement widely recognized multisensory strategies. They also reveal that while teachers display resourcefulness, systemic gaps in training and parental involvement

continue to hinder optimal outcomes. The implications are clear: sustained progress for learners with dyslexia depends on a triad of specialized teacher preparation, active parental engagement, and supportive institutional policies.

#### *Limitations*

This study was limited by its small sample size and reliance on self-reported data, which may not fully capture classroom realities. Additionally, the findings reflect practices in a specific local context and may not be generalizable across all educational settings.

#### *Recommendations*

Future research should include larger samples and observational methods to triangulate teacher accounts with actual classroom practices. Professional development programs should be designed to provide practical, dyslexia-specific training and ongoing mentorship. Schools may also benefit from structured parent engagement initiatives and collaborative professional learning communities that ensure consistency between home and school practices.

### **D. Specific Action Plans of SPED Teachers**

This section investigated the instructional practices and emotional challenges of SPED teachers in supporting learners with dyslexia. The findings revealed five emergent themes: (1) educational equity through tailored instruction and growth, (2) fostering resilience through support and growth, (3) empowerment through leadership and mentorship, (4) managing workload and preventing burnout, and (5) enhancing teacher well-being through communication and collaboration. Together, these themes highlighted the interplay between professional capacity, emotional resilience, and systemic support in shaping teacher effectiveness and well-being.

#### *Educational Equity through Tailored Instruction and Growth*

Teachers consistently emphasized the importance of tailoring instruction to the unique needs of dyslexic learners. Strategies such as task analysis, use of visuals, and simplified language were reported as effective in enhancing comprehension. These findings are consistent with prior research showing that multisensory and structured approaches significantly improve literacy outcomes for students with dyslexia (Birsh & Carreker, 2018; Snowling & Hulme, 2020). However, participants noted that professional development opportunities often lacked depth, as most training addressed disabilities in general rather than dyslexia specifically. This reflects earlier studies highlighting gaps in teacher preparation programs that inadequately prepare educators for condition-specific instruction (Washburn et al., 2011). By documenting this gap, the present study contributes evidence for the urgent need for dyslexia-focused training to promote instructional equity.

#### *Fostering Resilience through Support and Growth*

Findings revealed that teachers experienced frequent stress and emotional fatigue, especially following intensive activities such as IEP meetings. Structured recovery time, flexible scheduling, and wellness initiatives were described as helpful in sustaining resilience. Peer support and team-building activities were also identified as protective factors against emotional strain. These findings echo research that links teacher resilience to collegial support and institutional practices that prioritize well-being (Beltman et al., 2011). The study extends this literature by underscoring the role of structured decompression opportunities as critical for sustaining motivation and reducing burnout.

#### *Empowerment through Leadership and Mentorship*

Teachers highlighted the positive influence of supportive leadership and peer mentorship. Principals who shared strategies and provided guidance alleviated instructional burdens, while collaborative exchanges among colleagues built confidence and competence. These findings align

with research that emphasizes distributed leadership and mentoring as key to professional growth and teacher retention (Leithwood et al., 2019). What this study adds is the connection between leadership support and teachers' emotional well-being, suggesting that mentorship functions not only as a pedagogical resource but also as an emotional buffer.

#### *Managing Workload and Preventing Burnout*

Teachers reported excessive workloads, noting that class sizes far exceeded the recommended policy guidelines. This imbalance resulted in emotional exhaustion and diminished instructional effectiveness. These findings are consistent with prior studies linking large class sizes to teacher stress, diminished instructional quality, and higher risk of burnout (Chang, 2009; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). The present study contributes by providing context-specific evidence of the disparity between policy and practice, emphasizing the need for enforceable class size regulations to protect both instructional quality and teacher well-being.

#### *Enhancing Teacher Well-being through Communication and Collaboration*

The findings also highlighted that teacher well-being is closely tied to both mental health support and collaboration with parents. Participants emphasized the value of seminars addressing teacher mental health and noted that cooperative parental involvement improved both motivation and instructional effectiveness. This resonates with earlier work showing that strong parent-teacher partnerships enhance learning outcomes for students with dyslexia (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). By linking parental collaboration directly to teacher well-being, this study underscores the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement in fostering sustainable teaching practices.

#### *Contributions and Implications*

Overall, the study contributes to the literature by integrating the dual dimensions of instructional practice and emotional well-being in the context of dyslexia education. It demonstrates that while SPED teachers employ effective adaptive strategies, their effectiveness is contingent on systemic support structures, including targeted training, manageable workloads, and collaborative partnerships. The implications are significant: improving the educational experiences of learners with dyslexia requires not only instructional innovation but also policies and practices that safeguard teacher wellness and resilience.

#### *Limitations*

This study was limited by its small sample size and reliance on self-reported data, which may have introduced bias or omitted nuances observable through classroom observation. Additionally, findings were drawn from a specific institutional context and may not be generalizable to all SPED settings.

#### *Recommendations*

Future research should adopt mixed-methods approaches, combining teacher narratives with classroom observations and student performance data to triangulate findings. Policymakers and school leaders should prioritize dyslexia-specific professional development, enforce manageable class sizes, and provide structured wellness programs for teachers. Finally, schools may benefit from formalizing parent engagement initiatives and establishing peer mentorship networks to strengthen both instructional practice and emotional resilience.

## **5 Conclusion**

This study examined the emotional challenges faced by Special Education (SPED) teachers in addressing the needs of dyslexic learners, particularly those with persistent reading and writing

difficulties. Findings revealed that teachers experienced emotional exhaustion, frustration, self-doubt, and feelings of inadequacy, which were shaped by heavy workloads, insufficient training, and limited institutional support. Despite these challenges, teachers adopted strategies such as multisensory instruction, differentiated learning, collaboration with parents and colleagues, and engagement in professional development.

The study further emphasized that effective support for dyslexic learners depends not only on instructional strategies but also on teacher well-being. The proposed action plan highlighted the need for dyslexia-specific training, manageable workloads, access to mental health resources, and collaborative opportunities that foster resilience and empowerment. These results underscore the importance of comprehensive, targeted, and sustained support for SPED teachers to enhance both their professional capacity and emotional health.

Based on the study's findings and conclusions, the following directions are recommended for future research:

1. Examine the emotional experiences of SPED teachers working with learners with other disabilities such as ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and intellectual disabilities to provide a broader understanding of emotional demands across diverse learner profiles.
2. Conduct longitudinal studies to explore the long-term effects of emotional challenges on SPED teachers' mental health, job performance, and career sustainability.
3. Investigate the efficacy of intervention programs—such as structured counseling, wellness initiatives, and professional learning communities—in reducing teacher stress and preventing burnout.
4. Undertake comparative studies between public and private institutions to identify differences in support systems, working conditions, and stressors, thereby informing equitable policies and resource allocation.
5. Expand qualitative research to include perspectives from administrators, parents, and learners for a more holistic understanding of emotional dynamics in special education.
6. Explore the influence of cultural, spiritual, and societal values in shaping teacher resilience, with particular attention to culturally relevant strategies for SPED teacher support in the Philippine context.

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