

A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' USE OF DISTANCE LEARNING MODALITIES IN MISAMIS ORIENTAL, PHILIPPINES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Jhoanna D. Abrazado¹, Sarah Namoco², Sol Dalonos³

University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines, Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines 9000

¹jhoanna.abrazado@gmail.com, ²sarah.namoco@ustp.edu.ph, ³sol.dalonos@ustp.edu.ph

ABSTRACT: *With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, special education (sped) teachers are struggling to transition from the traditional face-to-face special education setting into a distance education setting especially for students with significant disabilities. Amidst the plethora of studies regarding teaching practices during the Covid-19 pandemic, literature is scarce when it comes to investigating SPED teachers' lived experiences while employing distance learning modalities in the Philippine setting. This study is in conjunction with Social Constructionism in understanding the new reality brought about by the phenomenon. This transcendental phenomenology study aims to understand the essence of the lived experiences of eight special education teachers, who were purposively selected, from the Department of Education in Northern Mindanao, Philippines. Employing a thematic analysis approach, this study revealed sped teachers' beliefs on focusing on what really matters, the feelings of frustration, empathy, and altruism. The interpretation of these four themes in the context of the participants' experiences contributes to the educational and practical implications in special education practice. Recommendations for future studies are also presented in this study.*

Keywords: Department of Education Sped Teachers in the Philippines, distance learning modalities, phenomenological study, self-learning modules, social constructionism

INTRODUCTION

With the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic-induced shift in education, special education teachers, more aptly called sped teachers, were thrust into the uncharted territory of delivering special education remotely. Sped teachers now have to teach, and students with disabilities now have to learn, through any of these distance learning modalities: online synchronous, online asynchronous, digital offline modular, home-based educational tv, radio-based instruction with print, and home-based print modular [1]. The use of distance learning modalities in teaching students with disabilities posed a unique challenge for sped teachers questioning whether the brick-and-mortar face-to-face special education setting can be transformed into a distance education setting [2]. Various news articles and television news reported sped teachers' frustrations over the new normal in education. Special education simply cannot be done virtually or through self-learning modules [3].

According to Vygotsky, a genuinely differentiated learning environment is required to develop higher psychological functions and the overall personality of a child with a disability. Students with disabilities should be provided with a differentiated curriculum, specially trained teachers, special auxiliary means, and more time to learn [4]. For this precise reason, sped teachers became excessively worried for a whole subset of students with disabilities who they believe will not benefit from any of the distance learning modalities [5]. Sped teachers also feared that their students might regress since they no longer have direct access to trained special education teachers [6]. In a study conducted by Glessner and Johnson [8], sped teachers also expressed feelings of worry and the sense of not controlling their students' learning during the pandemic. Sped teachers struggle with their loss of symbolic representation as teachers. They questioned how much parents and caregivers can help given that students with disabilities rely on specialized coaching and instructions [7]. Sped teachers struggle about not knowing

where their students are with their goals and objectives [8].

These conundrums of overwhelming and conscious experiences by the use of distance learning modalities in teaching students with disabilities during the Covid-19 pandemic constitute the central phenomenon to the study. A phenomenon is defined as the object of human experience [36].

Theoretical Framework

This study is concurrent with the views of social constructionism as it draws from the lived experiences of sped teachers who are using distance learning modalities during the Covid-19 pandemic. Social constructionism is principally concerned with clarifying the process by which people describe, explain, or account for the world they live in [9]. As a transcendental phenomenological study, this study sought to describe the meaning of several individuals of their lived experiences of the phenomenon. According to Camargo, Borges, and Rasesa (2013), meanings are socially constructed via the coordination of people in their various encounters. Furthermore, from the constructionists' position, the process of understanding is not automatically driven by the forces of nature but is the result of an active, cooperative enterprise of persons in relation. [9]

Problem Statement

While a similar study elsewhere [8], about special education teachers' perceptions during the Covid-9 pandemic, there is scarcity in literature when it comes to investigating, from the transcendental phenomenology's paradigm, the lived experiences of SPED teachers in the Department of Education located in Northern Mindanao, Philippines as they carry out distance learning modalities in their teaching practice. To address this identified problem, this study seeks to answer the question: What is the essence of special education teachers' lived experiences on the use of distance learning modalities during the Covid-19 pandemic qualitative study to explore the phenomenon being examined?. There is a necessity for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, and it can only be achieved through the stories of people who experienced the central phenomenon being

studied firsthand [10]. More specifically, this study employed a transcendental phenomenological research design. According to Creswell, a phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon. This phenomenon is further described as an object of human experience [11].

As a transcendental phenomenological study, this study focused less on the researcher's interpretation and more on describing the participants' experiences to convey their overall essence in teaching students with disabilities using distance learning modalities during the Covid-19 pandemic. [11]

Participants of the Study

This study consisted of eight sped teachers from the Department of Education (DepEd) Division of Misamis Oriental located in Northern Mindanao, the Philippines, who are using distance learning modalities during the Covid-19 pandemic. Purposeful sampling was used to select participants who can share rich data in understanding the study's research problem and central phenomenon. According to Creswell (2013), all participants of a phenomenological study must experience the phenomenon being studied. Participants were selected based on the following inclusion and exclusion criteria: (1) must have been

teaching in special education for at least two years, whether tenured or not tenured and, (2) must be using any of the distance learning modalities in teaching

students with disabilities during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Interview Protocol

In a qualitative study, the researcher is the key research instrument. In this study, the data were collected through focus group discussion using open-ended and semi-structured interviews. The researchers developed the interview questions. The interview questions were submitted for validation to an expert in special education and an expert in a qualitative study. Probing questions were asked based on participants' comments rather than on a pre-existing theory.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data were collected through focus group discussions with participants via Google Meet. Rubin and Rubin (2011) suggested that interview forms and conversational guidelines are most aptly used during the interview to keep the discussion focused and on track. Interview questions were open-ended to explore experiences and uncover meaningful structures [12]. With participants' written consent, the FGDs were video-recorded. This allowed the researchers to take note of nonverbal messages being conveyed such as tone of voice, verbal inflection, facial expressions such as eye gaze, interpersonal spacing, touch, and gestures. Since participants used a combination of the local Visayan dialect and English, video recordings were then transcribed in the original source language first before translating to English. Transcripts were consistently checked against translated interpretations during analysis (IRC).

Table 1. Interview Questions

Broad interview questions	
What are your lived experiences as special education teachers in the use of distance learning modalities during the Covid-19 pandemic?	
Specific interview questions	
a.	Which distance learning modalities do you use during the Covid-19 pandemic?
b.	Can you describe your experiences in using distance learning modalities during the Covid-19 pandemic?
c.	How do you assess the progress of your students during the Covid-19 pandemic?
d.	How satisfied are you over your students' progress during the Covid-19 pandemic?
e.	In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of using distance learning modalities during the Covid-19 pandemic?
f.	What keeps you going despite the many challenges of teaching special education during the pandemic?

Table 2. Excerpt of thematic data analysis

SAMPLE QUOTES	CODES	CATEGORIES	THEME
I have no idea which strategy works because I only rely on the parents' feedback regarding their child's progress.	assessment based only on parents' feedback	Unreliable assessment	
We were unsure about the reliability of the answers in the modules because there were parents and caregivers who answered the modules instead of our students.	unsure		
I am just upset that there were some things in the modules that were important for the children to answer on their own but couldn't because the parents did it already.	upset	Unrecompensed teachers' efforts	
I feel frustrated because I know that there was no learning taking place given what is happening.	no learning is taking place		Frustration
I cannot assure 100% that we can track the progress of our learners.	cannot personally track students' progress	Lack of control	
We tried our best but there were some things we really can't force to happen.	feeling of helplessness		

Sometimes the vision of the supervisor varied greatly from what was actually happening. We needed them to understand that some of their expectations were not possible.	expectation vs reality	Unrealistic and unattainable expectations
Perhaps our supervisors have forgotten that we are handling students with special needs.	longing for empathy from superiors	

Data Analysis

Thematic data analysis was used in this study. Being a transcendental phenomenological study, the researchers first set aside prejudice and presuppositions so that the focus can be directed to the participants in the study [11]. The researchers then immersed themselves with the data to familiarize the depth and breadth of the content. Codes were produced to simplify and focus on specific characteristics of the data. Codes were then reviewed to consider whether they appeared to form a coherent pattern [13]. Similarly coded data were then grouped to create categories [14]. Data were then reduced into a more manageable set of significant themes that summarize the text. The researchers then wrote a detailed analysis for each theme, identifying the story that each theme tells. Final analysis and write-up of the report were then made. The final analysis created the overall meaning of the lived experiences of all the participants. Direct quotes from participants were included. More extensive passages of quotation were also included to give readers insight into the original texts. To build a valid argument for choosing the themes and give merit to the story constructed, the researchers referred back to the literature [13]. An excerpt of the data analysis is presented in Table 2.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to the interview, permission to conduct the study was sought from the Schools Division Superintendent of DepEd Misamis Oriental. Before the conduct of the focus group interview, the researchers sent a letter of invitation to the selected participants. Upon the approval of the participants to join the study, the researchers discussed the purpose of the study, the approximate amount of time needed to complete

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study aims to convey the essence of special education teachers’ lived experiences on the use of distance learning modalities during the Covid-19 pandemic. During data analysis, the themes that emerged were the following: focusing on what really matters, frustration, empathy, and altruism. Each theme is characterized by categories that are discussed in this section (please see Figure 1).

Theme 1: Focusing on What Really Matters

While the Covid-19 has exacerbated the learning crisis, it has also made teachers reflect on what learning was for and reassess what skills needed to be delivered and learned [15]. Since the new learning setup may incur learning gaps among students, schools must tailor learning to build and maintain the foundation for lifetime learning [16].

Streamlining the curriculum. According to sped teachers, many of their students have significant cognitive disabilities and were not yet ready for pen and paper tasks. They resolved to focus on other domains, particularly life skills. This was validated by their consulting developmental pediatrician, as narrated by T3:

“Our developmental pediatrician suggested to make LAPs for life skills, so, we made and bought digital resources about life skills online. Our LAPs for livelihood and life skills are full of instructions for the parents on what their children need to do and some pictures to visualize the activity. For example, one of our modules in transition is about life skills such as how to wash dishes, how to do laundry, and even livelihood skills like planting monggo since the kids in this category are not interested with (functional academics like) colors, letters, and numbers.”

While DepEd has released the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) which served as the primary reference of all schools in determining learning and delivery approaches during the Covid-19 pandemic [1], the earmark of special education has always been individualization [17]. However, individualization proved to be difficult because it requires a thorough assessment which was not possible considering the restrictions brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. Sped teachers, therefore, had to figure out a way to prepare LAPs that were not only aligned with the MELCs set by DepEd but also meet the needs of their students with disabilities. Sped teachers’ decision to streamline the curriculum to focus on life skills was also under UNICEF’s Guidance: Assessing and Monitoring Covid- 19 pandemic, sped teachers found themselves scrambling on ways to meet all their tasks. These tasks include preparing and modifying modules to meet the varied needs of their students with disabilities, making instructional videos, attending to the overwhelming

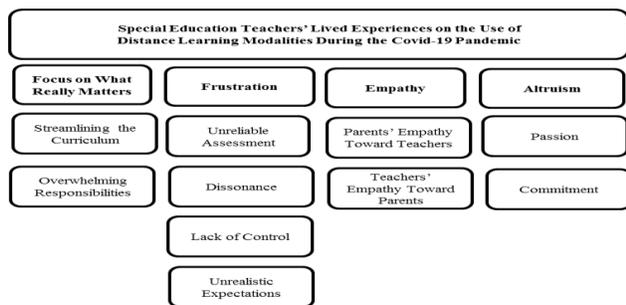


Figure 1. emerging themes of the study

Learning During the Covid-19 Crisis (2020). This states that children can and should not be expected to learn the same scope and breadth of content as in non-crisis conditions.

Prioritizing Teachers’ Tasks. With the advent of the

amount of paperwork, distributing and collecting LAPs, coordinating with the parents, among others. As a result, sped teachers acknowledged that some of the tasks, including developing more reliable assessment procedures, would have to wait until the next school year. According to T3:

"We were so focused on developing modules this school year that we did not have enough time to develop assessments that would accurately monitor the learners' progress. We were so loaded with all the tasks we were required to finish – LAPs, instructional videos, reports – and we still have our own duties and responsibilities aside from these."

Even before the pandemic, the teaching profession has already required sped teachers to assume numerous roles with varying complexities [18]. With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, new protocols for distance learning, online or otherwise, required sped teachers to rapidly change their practices, including daily tasks, responsibilities, and accountabilities [15]. These changes led to a significant increase in teachers' workloads which affected their mental wellbeing [19].

Theme 2: Frustration

Frustration occurs in situations when a person is hindered from achieving the desired or perceived outcome. It is experienced when the results of goals do not meet the expectations based on the efforts exerted. Its causes can either be internal or external. Internal sources involve disappointment on not achieving the set goal or when the goals interfere with one another. On the other hand, external sources involve circumstances outside the person's control [20].

Unreliable Assessment. Sped teachers found themselves struggling to assess student's learning progress. The majority of their students do not have access to gadgets and the internet. Sped teachers had to rely heavily on parents' feedback to keep track of their student's learning progress. As a result, they had no way of knowing if students answered the LAPs or by somebody else. In many incidents, however, the unreliability of the LAPs became evident because of the handwriting. To quote T1's remark, *"I have learners who, during face-to-face instruction, did not even know how to hold a pencil yet.... but now, during a pandemic, they could return their modules so quickly!"* T2 also validated T1's remark by adding, *"I have been surprised many times how good my learners' handwriting has become in their modules. Some can even color very well now!"* Sped teachers were also appalled by how widespread these occurrences were. According to T3, *"Out of 32 parents, you would be lucky if there were 10 of them who gave honest feedback about the progress of their children."* This was supported by T4 who

added, –out of my 14 learners, there were only 3 of whom I could attest that answered their modules honestly."

Putting monitoring mechanisms in place during the pandemic is challenging especially that there were no available baseline data [15]. While distance learning programs integrated a formative assessment component whereby parents submitted their children's LAPs to sped teachers and sped teachers provide feedback to parents, these assessments were perceived by sped teachers as

unreliable. For the sped teachers, it was evident by the handwriting of the answers on the returned modules that the LAPs were not answered by the students themselves. In many instances, parents validated these claims by admitting to answering the LAPs on behalf of their children for the sake of compliance. Because of this, sped teachers cannot help but feel frustrated. According to Lavian (2014), sped teachers require in-depth knowledge of all their students' special needs and must know what is necessary to teach them. Parents tampering with their children's assessment hindered sped teachers from achieving this purpose, thereby causing frustration.

Dissonance. Teachers expressed dismay whenever parents answer the LAPs themselves instead of facilitating learning to their children. Teachers have pleaded so many times with the parents to let their children answer their own module. To quote T5, *–I have bluntly asked some parents if whose handwriting was on the module just to let them know that I do not approve of what they were doing."* She added, *"We are satisfied with the modules we made but not with the outcome"*. T2 also expressed her frustration by saying,

"It stole the opportunity from the learner to experience answering their own modules and learning from it. I often tell the parents to let the kids answer their own modules even if they would just scratchgibberish on their papers."

This was seconded by T8 who shared that, *"I was upset because I knew that there were activities that the children could have successfully answered on their own if only the parents had the time to facilitate the learning."*

Despite knowing that many of the LAPs were not answered by the students themselves, sped teachers are left without a choice but to accept it. This was evident when T5 added, *"I just accepted the outputs they submitted and checked them. At least, they returned the module. My principal would surely look for the modules (and I don't want to get into trouble)." This was supported by T1 who revealed, "I have no choice but to accept their submissions."*

Cognitive dissonance is defined as a situation involving conflicting attitudes, beliefs or behaviors that produce a feeling of mental discomfort leading to a shift in one of the attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors to reduce the discomfort and restore balance [21]. Sped teachers experienced dissonance whenever they had to struggle between knowing — what should be versus — what was going on". This occurred each time they were left with no choice but to accept LAPs which they knew were not even answered by their students. This contributes to the feeling of frustration. Sped teachers have always found joy even in their students' smallest progress. When T2 said to allow the student to write gibberish on her paper, she meant that small progress, such as a child who cannot really properly hold a pencil but is writing gibberish on paper, is already progress worth acknowledging.

Lack of control. Sped teachers also shared that many parents only cooperated when cash grants were scheduled to be released by the government through the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (Bridging the Filipino Family Program)*, more aptly called *4Ps*. Apparently, one

of the requirements of the release of 4Ps cash grants of the beneficiaries was the signature of their children's teachers attesting to the completeness of their children's LAPs and other performance tasks. According to T5, *"Parents tend to return the LAPs very late. They would only report to school when they needed the teacher's signature for their 4P's release."*

A study elsewhere [8], reported how distance learning prompted new learning setups where teachers felt out of control of their students' learning. Teachers now had to rely heavily on the parents to facilitate the activities given to the students. This translated to sped teachers having to consistently follow up with the parents to submit their children's LAPs. They were frustrated that parents only submitted the LAPs whenever 4Ps cash grants were scheduled for release. ***Unrealistic and Unattainable Expectations.*** While sped teacher described their superiors as supportive, they also revealed feeling frustrated when their superiors set unrealistic and unattainable expectations. This occurred when the vision set by their superiors varied greatly from what was actually happening. According to T3,

"There were some expectations that we believe were realistic and attainable. There were also some that were not. If I could bluntly say this, I would tell them. Why not take my place so you would know how I am feeling?"

T5 added, *"Perhaps our supervisors have forgotten that we are handling students with special needs."*

According to Lavian (2014), sped teachers experience stress when they are required to conform to the organization and its structures. Sped teachers need to take account of their students' needs and accept the constraints of reality, increasing its complexity further. This was resonated by T5 when she felt that her supervisors must have forgotten to consider that her students have disabilities. To echo UNICEF's (2020) guidelines, children, especially those with disabilities, cannot and should not be expected to learn and progress across the intended curriculum through self-learning methods with few interactions from teachers.

Theme 3: Empathy

Empathy allows us to understand what other people are thinking and feeling, to emotionally engage with them, and to care for their well-being [22]. With the parents assuming the role as facilitators of their children's learning, they could now empathize with sped teachers' challenges in teaching their children with disabilities. On the other hand, sped teachers felt parents' overwhelming challenges considering that parents are not trained sped teachers, have other jobs and have other children to attend to.

Parents' empathy toward teachers. With the parents now taking the teachers' place as the facilitator of learning, teachers felt a sense of relief that parents finally realized the joys and challenges of teaching their children with disabilities. According to T2,

"My parents were now able to share in the joys of small improvements just like one of my parents who happily reported that her child could finally sit still and could even be asked to do some chores."

Special education teachers also expressed a sense of relief when parents finally understood the struggle of

teaching their children with disabilities. From the perspective of the special education teachers, there were still parents who, before the Covid-19 pandemic, were unaccepting of the fact that their children have disabilities. The pandemic gave the opportunity for the parents to know their children better. They have now come to terms with what their children can and cannot do.

Teachers' empathy toward parents. To parents, special education teachers are often seen as the — silver bullet, providing relief to the daily challenges of handling their children with disabilities. When parents found themselves in the frontline of their children's education, they scrambled on ways to perform their new role as facilitators of learning. As a response, special education teachers would text or call the parents as often as possible to accommodate questions about the LAPs, follow up on their children's progress, and suggest strategies to manage their children's behavior. As T6 puts it,

"I became a call center agent for my parents. We had this "Text Mo, Tawag Mo" (Your Text, Your Call) program in our school wherein we gave keypad phones to parents who did not have cellphones. I called them 2 or 3 times a week to accommodate any questions about the LAPs. Since I was constantly communicating with them through texts and calls, I became a lot closer to them. They told me about their difficulties in handling their kids so I suggested some strategies they could use."

While many parents could find ways to cope, there were some, who sadly, had to seemingly give up. As T3 shared,

"Some parents really do not know how to teach their children. When they tried to do so, they (the parent and child) would end up fighting. Parents would ask me when face-to-face classes would resume. They would tell me that they would just let their children stop school and let them come back when it's face-to-face already. I had to compromise with the parents to let their children stay in school."

Sped teachers also empathized with parents who struggled to balance their work, manage their household chores, and facilitate their children's learning. Most of these parents have more than one child in school; hence, they had to attend to the LAPs of all their other children, apart from their child with a disability. T6 shared,

"I had a single-parent who works as a stay-out helper. She was overwhelmed with the task of teaching her child with a disability and was considering letting her child stop schooling. I had to assure her that I will accept late submission of LAPs just so she would not let her child stop schooling."

Sped teachers were also apprehensive about how parents who do not even know how to read and write could even facilitate their children's learning. As T5 shared, *"modules were challenging for parents who cannot read and write"*.

The onset of the pandemic made it more challenging for

parents of children with disabilities as they must deal not only with the needs of their children but also with their own apprehensions due to uncertain times alongside the demands of their work [23]. Fostering an intense collaboration between teachers and parents has become essential more than ever. Therefore, teachers must develop a strong relationship with the parents by knowing who the parents are and frequently communicating with them [24]. The Peter Effect also claimed that one could not be expected to give what one does not possess [25]. Parents who cannot read or write cannot teach their children to do so. Teachers must therefore exert all efforts necessary to bridge the learning gap for their students with illiterate parents.

Theme 4: Altruism

A study by Fish and Stephens (2009) found that the opportunity and ability to serve students with special needs is the most influential factor in teachers' decision to pursue a career in special education. It is also reported in the same study that the students are one of the most significant contributors to the teachers' job satisfaction.

Commitment. When asked by the researchers about what keeps them going despite the many challenges of teaching special education during the Covid-19 pandemic, the sped teachers quickly answered that their students keep them going. According to T3,

"I can't help but think about what will happen to them if we leave them behind? Who will teach them? We really do love our kids. There are only a few people who will choose to be in this profession. There are only a few who would exert much effort in teaching these kids because they can really be challenging to handle. We will stay and continue teaching. We will continue developing learning materials because we have the heart of giving them this education. It's a challenging but fulfilling job – to educate these kids." T6 added, *–I really thought about this, that if there are no SPED teachers - if we will not continue, who will be there for these children with special needs? I believe that teaching in SPED is a gift from God. Like we have been chosen. Chosen by God to teach this group of kids. I truly believe that God has planned that we, the SPED teachers with me right now, will teach these kids. It is not easy to deal with children with special needs. You must give 100% of your patience. Like what the others have mentioned – we chose to stay because of commitment and passion – and because I believe that we are the chosen ones [for this profession].*

According to Lavian, one of the most complex aspects of the relationship between special education teachers and pupils is the commitment involved. Special education teachers see themselves as capable and responsible for meeting the challenges involved in teaching students with disabilities [18]. This is particularly true in the case of the 8 participants in this study.

Passion. The participants shared that during the conduct of their home visitation, they were so filled with joy and excitement upon seeing their students once more.

T3 shared that, *– Hangop*, from the Visayan dialect

which means *–longing*, was the word they used to describe how they felt when they saw their students. T4 added, *–I really miss them. When we do home visitation and the kids would hug us. We cannot do anything about it. It's just nice to feel also that they miss us.* The participants were quick to add though that they made sure to follow basic health safety protocols like the use of face masks, face shields, and sanitizing their hands with alcohol.

The sped teachers' accounts support a study by Cunningham (2015) which revealed that sped teachers' greatest motivation is centered on their love and care for their students. Indeed, this was resonated loudly by the eight participants of this study. During the focus group discussion, they repeatedly attested their love and concern for their students with disabilities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study examined special education teachers' joint understanding of the new reality — remote special education. As a transcendental phenomenological study, this study conveyed the essence of special education teachers' lived experiences on the use of distance learning modalities during the Covid-19 pandemic. It highlighted the need to focus on what really matters by streamlining the curriculum and prioritizing teachers' tasks. It was able to capture sped teachers' frustration with unreliable assessment, dissonance, lack of control, and unattainable and unrealistic expectations. It demonstrated reciprocating empathy between sped teachers and parents. Above all, it also resonated sped teachers' altruistic motivations of commitment and passion toward teaching students with disabilities.

The findings of this study contribute to the body of knowledge through practical and educational implications. First, there is a need to strengthen assessment for self-learning modules (referred to as LAPs in this study). Thus, for curriculum developers and implementors, the development of more reliable assessment measures can be used as an avenue for future research. Secondly, for stakeholders, more consideration must also be given to parents as they embark on this new challenge of being the primary facilitators of their children's learning.

In the light of the findings of this study, it is recommended that future studies may consider exploring parents of children with disabilities and the children's lived experiences on the distant modality of learning during the Covid-19 pandemic to holistically improve remote special education. A similar study may also be conducted quantitatively so that the sped teachers' perceptions, based on the four themes that emerged in this study, can be measured numerically.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The data of this study are self-reported from eight sped teachers who are employed in DepEd in Northern Mindanao, Philippines. This study did not measure the participants' perceptions quantitatively. The data was also collected remotely through Google Meet due to the Covid-19 protocols, hence the limitation to personally access the research participants.

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