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COMPETENCIES, RESILIENCE, OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES AND COPING MECHANISMS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS TEACHING LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to assess the competencies, resilience, opportunities, challenges, and coping mechanisms of Special Education (SPED) teachers in Roxas City, Capiz, during 2022-2023. The research involved 58 teachers, employing a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques, as well as in-depth interviews. The results showed that the perceived competencies, resilience, and opportunities of SPED teachers were high. However, there was no significant relationship between competencies, civil status, and specialization. There was also no significant relationship between opportunities, civil status, and specialization. The study identified challenges related to learners, curriculum, instruction, and parental involvement. Coping mechanisms included maintaining passion, maintaining a positive outlook, seeking social support, conducting root cause analysis, pursuing professional growth, taking breaks, and planning. An action plan was formulated to address these issues. The findings suggest that SPED teachers face various challenges in their teaching and learning experiences.

KEYWORDS: SPED Teachers, Competencies, Resilience, Opportunity, Challenges, Coping-Mechanism, Learners with Special Education needs (LSENs) Division of Roxas City

1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers are often remembered not only for the lessons they impart but also for the lasting impressions they leave on their learners. In the case of Special Education (SPED), this influence becomes even more profound, as SPED teachers play a critical role in shaping the academic, social, and emotional development of children with exceptionalities (Magallanes et al., 2025). SPED is a specialized collection of educational programs and services designed to meet the unique needs of students with cognitive, physical, social, and emotional impairments. Children with developmental delays often lag behind their peers in terms of physical, mental, and academic abilities (Cheung et al., 2021), necessitating the expertise of highly qualified SPED teachers. These teachers are responsible for crafting and implementing individualized curricula, managing behavior, collaborating with families and professionals, and fostering inclusive and supportive learning environments.

With the increasing number of learners with special needs in the Philippines, teacher education programs have expanded their focus on SPED to prepare teachers for diverse learning contexts, including self-contained classrooms, inclusive schools, and resource rooms (Espeño et al., 2024). SPED teachers are expected to possess competencies in both content knowledge and disability-specific instruction, while also serving multiple roles such as curriculum planner, counselor, advocate, collaborator, and researcher (Mooney, 2021). Moreover, the implementation of inclusive education has further intensified the demand for skilled SPED teachers who can address diverse learner profiles, work collaboratively with general education teachers, and adapt to complex classroom dynamics (Faragher et al., 2021).

Despite the rewarding nature of SPED teaching, the profession is marked by challenges that can compromise teacher resilience and retention. These include heavy workloads, behavioral concerns, limited resources, unclear role expectations, and the pressures of designing individualized education programs (IEPs). Research has shown that inadequate coping strategies may lead to stress, burnout, and even attrition among SPED educators (Ali, 2025; Brittle, 2020; Hester et al., 2020; Jackson & Parker, 2023; Pavlidou et al., 2022). Conversely, effective coping mechanisms enhance teachers' well-being, resilience, and long-term commitment to the profession (Algorani & Gupta, 2023; Bagdžiūnienė et al., 2023; Kamboj & Garg, 2021; Polizzi et al., 2020). The ability to balance professional expectations with personal well-being is, therefore, a critical component of SPED teacher effectiveness.

In Roxas City, Capiz, a limited number of SPED centers cater to students with exceptionalities, including those with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, hearing and visual impairments, and learning disabilities. These schools offer academic interventions, curriculum adaptations, transition programs, and referral systems in collaboration with families, local government units, and community organizations. However, with the increasing number of learners and the shortage of qualified SPED teachers, many regular teachers are tasked to handle special education classes without sufficient preparation. This situation creates significant gaps in competencies, resilience, and coping strategies among teachers, which may undermine the quality of SPED services in the division.

Given these realities, it is imperative to examine the current state of SPED teachers in Roxas City, particularly their competencies, opportunities, challenges, resilience, and coping mechanisms. This study employed a concurrent mixed-method research design across five SPED schools in the division to investigate the demographic profiles of teachers, their teaching competencies, the extent of opportunities in their careers, their resiliency levels, challenges encountered, and coping mechanisms employed. Ultimately, the findings of this study aim to inform the development of an action plan that will strengthen teacher preparation, professional support, and sustainability in SPED teaching within the Division of Roxas City.

2. LITERATURE OF THE STUDY

Special Education (SPED) is grounded on a rich theoretical and legal foundation that highlights both the complexity of teaching learners with special needs and the competencies required of teachers in this field. Several learning theories serve as anchors for understanding how SPED teachers develop instructional practices, cope with challenges, and sustain resilience in their profession.

Lev Vygotsky's (1934) Theory of Social Constructivism emphasizes that knowledge is socially constructed through communication and cultural interaction (Zajda, 2021). Learning, therefore, is shaped by collaboration and social context rather than by individual cognition alone (De Felice et al., 2023; Mildner & Tamir, 2021). This theory emphasizes the importance of collaborative practices in SPED, where teachers, parents, and allied professionals work together to co-construct learning opportunities for children with exceptionalities. Closely tied to the interpretive paradigm, social constructivism recognizes that learners construct distinct realities, which informs the individualized and contextualized nature of special education instruction (Özer Sanal & Erdem, 2023).

Complementing this perspective, John B. Watson's (1913) Behaviorism highlights the role of stimulus-response associations in learning (Muhajirah, 2020). Within SPED, behaviorist approaches remain highly relevant, particularly in functional behavioral analysis and individualized interventions that reinforce adaptive (Robertson et al., 2022; Tevis & Matson, 2022). Direct instruction, feedback, and structured reinforcement continue to provide effective means of shaping learners' responses, especially for those with developmental and behavioral challenges (Spencer, 2021; Stockard et al., 2020).

Jean Piaget's (1950) Cognitivist Theory further enriches SPED practice by focusing on the mental processes of learners—memory, reflection, planning, and problem-solving—which are critical in developing transferable skills (Balestieri, 2024; Hamida & Siham, 2025; Thanopoulou, 2024). Cognitive approaches help SPED teachers link new knowledge with prior experiences, thereby enhancing meaningful learning. Such processes are vital in developing instructional strategies that enable students with special needs to build on existing knowledge while cultivating higher-order thinking skills (Anderson & Putman, 2020; Gerald et al., 2023; Kong & Wang, 2024).

Beyond these theoretical foundations, legal frameworks in the Philippines provide strong support for SPED. The 1987 Philippine Constitution (Art. XIV, Sec. 5) mandates the State to protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education and to ensure teachers' professional advancement (Mirasol et al., 2021). Republic Act 7277, or the "Magna Carta for Disabled Persons," guarantees rehabilitation, integration, and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities, underscoring the critical role of SPED programs in achieving inclusivity (Fontanilla -Pimentel, 2020; Toquero, 2020). Republic Act 10533, known as the "Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013," further strengthens the delivery of inclusive education through curriculum reforms (Gonzaga et al., 2024), while Republic Act 5250 institutionalizes training programs for teachers of exceptional children, recognizing the specialized skills needed in this field (Estrada, 2023; Gaytos, 2020).

Collectively, the theoretical perspectives and legal provisions provide the conceptual foundation of the present study, which investigates the competencies, professional opportunities, resilience, challenges, and coping mechanisms of SPED teachers.

3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This research aimed to determine the competencies, resilience, opportunities, and challenges faced by SPED teachers in selected schools in the City of Roxas, Province of Capiz, for the school year 2022–2023, as the basis for an action plan. Specifically, it sought to describe the respondents' profile in terms of age, gender, civil status, highest educational attainment, specialization, and number of years in teaching SPED; to assess their perceived level of competencies, resilience, and opportunities; and to determine whether significant relationships exist between their profile and their level of competencies, resilience, and opportunities, as well as between competencies, resilience, and opportunities themselves. Furthermore, the study examined whether significant differences exist in competencies, resilience, and opportunities when respondents are grouped according to their profile, identified the challenges they encounter in teaching learners with special educational needs (LSENs), and explored the strategies they employ to address these challenges.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component gathered data on the demographic profile, competencies, resilience, and opportunities of SPED teachers, while the qualitative aspect explored the challenges they encountered and their coping mechanisms. The research was conducted in five SPED schools in Roxas City, comprising three public and two private institutions: President Manuel Roxas Integrated School, Inzo Arnaldo Village Integrated School, Venancio Alba Integrated School, iCAN Learning Center, and Mind Haven School. The respondents consisted of 58 SPED teachers selected through purposive sampling, with 15 participating in in-depth interviews for the qualitative phase. The main instruments were researcher-adapted and modified questionnaires on competencies (Bibit, 2016), opportunities (Woulfin & Jones, 2021), and resilience (Quiachon, 2011), complemented by an interview guide for open-ended questions. Content validity was established through expert jurors, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. The data gathering procedure involved securing permission from the Schools Division Superintendent and school administrators, administering and retrieving the questionnaires, and conducting interviews with selected participants, ensuring confidentiality and adherence to ethical standards. For data treatment, descriptive and inferential statistics such as frequencies, means, percentages, standard deviation, Pearson correlation, and ANOVA with Tukey's method were employed for the quantitative data. At the same time, thematic analysis was used to interpret qualitative responses.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the study's results, derived from statistical and thematic analyses of data collected from surveys and in-depth interviews with special education teachers. The statistical data are presented in a tabular form, while the answers in the interview are in a narrative form.

5.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the SPED teacher-respondents were examined in terms of age and gender, civil status, highest educational attainment, specialization, and years of teaching in SPED. Table 1 presents the results.

Table 1
Demographic Profile of SPED Teacher-Respondents
(N = 58)

Profile Category	Classification	f	%
Age	41 years old & above	9	15.51
	36–40 years old	5	8.62
	31–35 years old	6	10.34
	26–30 years old	26	44.82
	25 years old & below	12	21.71
Gender	Female	53	91.38
	Male	5	8.62
Civil Status	Single	32	55.20
	Married	26	44.80
Highest Educational Attainment	Master's Graduate	18	31.00
	With Master's Units	23	39.70
	Bachelor's Degree	17	29.30
Specialization	BEED – Special Education	43	74.10
	BEED – General Education	9	15.50
	Social Work	2	3.40
	TLE	2	3.40
	BEED – Early Childhood Education	2	3.40
Years in Teaching SPED	15 years & above	8	13.80
	12–14 years	6	10.30
	6–11 years	18	31.10
	5 years & below	26	44.80

In terms of age and gender, findings indicated that a substantial proportion of teachers (44.82%) belonged to the 26–30 age group, suggesting that many were in the early stages of their professional careers. This demographic composition implies that the majority of SPED teachers may be more

adaptable to emerging pedagogical approaches, instructional technologies, and innovative strategies for teaching learners with special needs (LSENs). However, this also highlights the importance of ongoing professional development to enhance their expertise in the field. The results further revealed that the teaching workforce was predominantly female, with 91.4% of the respondents identifying as women. This reflects national trends in the Philippine education sector, where women constitute the majority of teachers (Kikkawa & Gaspar, 2023), and aligns with research indicating that female teachers are often perceived as nurturing and empathetic in the context of special education (Gilmour & Wehby, 2020). Reeve and Cheon (2021) further observed that while teachers gain professional insight with age, enthusiasm may diminish as responsibilities in teaching, administration, and research increase, highlighting the need to provide younger educators with adequate support to ensure long-term resilience.

About civil status, slightly more than half of the respondents (55.2%) were single, while 44.8% were married. This distribution suggests that a significant number of SPED teachers may still prioritize professional development, including pursuing graduate studies, as part of their career advancement. Single teachers may have greater flexibility to address the demanding workload associated with SPED, whereas married teachers may encounter challenges in balancing professional and family responsibilities. Previous studies suggest that unmarried teachers often demonstrate higher energy and commitment to their work (See et al., 2020) while married teachers tend to report higher job satisfaction and have been associated with positive student outcomes (Anyamene, 2020; Cahapay & Bangoc II, 2021; Demir-Yıldız, 2023; Kamran, 2021).

In terms of educational attainment, 39.70% of the respondents were pursuing master's units, 31.0% were master's degree holders, and 29.30% had only completed a bachelor's degree. These findings highlight the continuing pursuit of advanced education among SPED teachers, though many have not yet completed postgraduate qualifications. Higher educational attainment has been linked to greater pedagogical competence and innovative instructional practices (Delos Reyes & Torio, 2021). Nonetheless, Song and Zhou (2021) cautioned that education and experience serve only as proxies for teaching competence, with effectiveness ultimately determined by how teachers apply their knowledge and skills in classroom practice.

With respect to specialization, the majority of respondents (74.10%) specialized in Special Education, followed by General Education (15.5%), with smaller proportions holding backgrounds in Social Work, Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE), or Early Childhood Education. This distribution indicates that most respondents possessed formal training in SPED, equipping them with the requisite knowledge and skills to address the diverse needs of LSENs. Empirical evidence supports that SPED-trained teachers demonstrate greater competence than their general education counterparts, particularly in inclusive education contexts (Ismailos et al., 2022; Plotner et al., 2023; Yakut & Akgül, 2022). Moreover, graduates of SPED programs often perceive themselves as better prepared and more

effective compared to teachers who lack specialized training (Anderson & Putman, 2020; Markelz et al., 2022; Scott et al., 2022; Trust & Whalen, 2021).

Finally, in terms of years of teaching in SPED, nearly half of the respondents (44.8%) had five years or less teaching experience, while only a small proportion had taught for more than 12 years. This reflects the relatively recent establishment and expansion of SPED programs in Roxas City, indicating that the SPED teaching workforce is still in the process of developing deep expertise in the field. Teachers with limited experience may require ongoing mentoring and structured professional development to enhance their instructional competence. As Stronge (2018) emphasized, teacher quality is a critical determinant of student achievement, particularly in special education, where instructional adaptability and evidence-based practices are essential. Nilsen (2020) further reported that teachers with seven or more years of SPED teaching experience tend to feel more confident and effective in addressing the needs of students with disabilities compared to their less experienced counterparts.

5.2 Respondents' Perception of their Level of Competencies, Resilience, and Opportunities

This study also examined the levels of competencies, resilience, and opportunities of SPED teachers in the City of Roxas. A five-point Likert scale was employed to measure their competencies and the opportunities available to them in the field of special education. The results are presented in Table 2-4.

Table 2
Level of Competencies

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
1. I have the competence and patience to deal with special learners	4.59	0.56	Very High
2. I have collaborative effort and ideas with team members to develop transition plans.	4.55	0.60	Very High
3. I understand the similarities and differences of varying disabilities.	4.55	0.60	Very High
4. I know how to select the appropriate teaching strategies for LSENs	4.53	0.71	Very High
5. I have a parent-student engagement and collaboration strategy	4.53	0.60	Very High
6. I have specialized training and programs attended that focus on special educational needs and disabilities	4.47	0.78	Very High
7. I have the strength to adapt to educational transitions and diverse learners easily	4.38	0.67	Very High

8. I have collaborative efforts and ideas with team members to develop transition plans.	4.36	0.77	Very High
9. I have methods for guiding LSENs in identifying and organizing content.	4.34	0.69	Very High
10. I have parent-student engagement and collaboration strategy skills in handling SPED learners	4.34	0.60	Very High
11. I understand the similarities and differences of varying disabilities.	4.31	0.60	Very High
12. I have sufficient materials needed to teach my special education classes.	4.29	0.62	Very High
13. I have the strength to adapt to educational transitions and diverse learners easily.	4.29	0.67	Very High
14. I have sufficient materials needed to teach my special education classes.	4.28	0.87	Very High
15. I have full support from the stakeholders.	4.28	0.74	Very High
16. I have the strength to interpret sensory, mobility, and perceptual information to create/adapt appropriate learning plans.	4.24	0.71	Very High
17. I have the procedures for assessing and reporting behaviors	4.24	0.73	Very High
18. I have specific assessment instruments. like selecting, adapting, and modifying assessments.	4.21	0.67	Very High
19. I have specific knowledge of pedagogy, content, and technology for SPED learners	4.21	0.81	Very High
20. I have a vast knowledge of the special education Curriculum	4.17	0.80	High
Overall Level of Competencies	4.36	0.46	Very High

Legend: 4.20 – 5.00 *Very High* 3.40 – 4.19-*High* 2.60 – 3.39-*Average*
1.80 – 2.59-*Low* 1.0 – 1.79-*Very Low*

As shown in Table 2, the perceived level of competencies among SPED teachers was 4.36 with a standard deviation of 0.46, indicating a high level of competence. Specifically, the teachers demonstrated exceptional patience and competence in working with learners with special needs (LSENs), as reflected in an indicator mean of 4.59. This suggests that they were highly capable of collaborating and sharing ideas with team members in developing transition plans for LSENs. Moreover, the teachers exhibited strong skills in identifying appropriate instructional strategies and effectively engaging both parents and students in the learners' educational programs. These findings highlight the importance of continuously cultivating expertise and pedagogical proficiency in managing and instructing LSENs. As Garcia and Vargas (2021) and Sumayang et al. (2022)

emphasized, inadequate training may hinder teachers' ability to manage learners effectively, potentially leading to less favorable attitudes toward LSENs. Therefore, sustained support and professional development are essential to equip SPED teachers with the diverse strategies, techniques, and approaches necessary to address the unique needs of this population.

Table 3
Level of Resilience

Variable	Mean	SD	Description
1. I view change as an opportunity.	4.76	0.43	Very High
2. I can think positively about myself when faced with challenges in Special Education	4.69	0.50	Very High
3. As a SPED teacher, I know what is important to me.	4.69	0.53	Very High
4. As a SPED teacher, I approach new situations with an open mind.	4.67	0.47	Very High
5. When I have a problem, I take time to define the problem before deciding what to do.	4.67	0.51	Very High
6. I can empathize easily with others' frustrations, joys, misfortunes, and successes	4.58	0.57	Very High
7. When I look back, I can see some clear patterns in my life about the types of choices I have made.	4.55	0.54	Very High
8. I know what I want to achieve at work and in life.	4.55	0.66	Very High
9. I can adjust to changes	4.53	0.65	Very High
10. I find it easy to form lasting relationships and friendships	4.51	0.54	Very High
11. I perceive the challenges and problems of everyday life as challenges I can solve.	4.45	0.07	Very High
12. I have a diverse network of good colleagues in school.	4.45	0.57	Very High
13. I start each day by working out what needs to be achieved during the day, and I end by reviewing what has been achieved, and what needs to be achieved on the next day.	4.45	0.60	Very High
14. As a SPED teacher, I have the knowledge, skills, and experience to deal with Learners with Special Needs (LSENs).	4.43	0.70	Very High
15. When I face complex challenges, I can maintain confidence in my own ability to overcome the challenges.	4.40	0.68	Very High

16. When faced with new challenges, I can take control of the situation.	4.38	0.67	Very High
17. I can easily find ways of satisfying my own and other people's needs during times of change and conflicts.	4.35	0.58	Very High
18. I keep a "to-do" list. Moreover, use it every day.	4.27	0.80	Very High
19. When an unwelcome change involves me, I can usually find a way to make the change benefit myself.	4.24	0.71	Very High
20. I have the capacity to laugh at myself.	4.16	0.01	High
Overall Level of Resilience	4.50	0.40	Very High

Legend: 4.20 – 5.00 Very High 3.40 – 4.19-High 2.60 – 3.39-Average
1.80 – 2.59-Low 1.0 – 1.79-Very Low

As presented in Table 3, the perceived level of resilience among SPED teachers was 4.50 with a standard deviation of 0.40, indicating a very high level of resilience. This suggests that the teachers were able to effectively cope with the challenges and demands of working with learners with diverse educational needs and developmental disabilities. Teachers with high resilience were more inclined to view change as an opportunity, maintain a positive outlook on their professional roles, and demonstrate the ability to prioritize tasks even in challenging situations. They also exhibited openness to new circumstances, problem-solving skills, and the capacity to empathize with their colleagues' frustrations, successes, and struggles. These attributes underscore the vital role of resilience in sustaining teacher effectiveness within the context of special education. Mandel (2021) emphasized that resilience can be cultivated in schools by fostering strong collegial relationships and ensuring administrative support for SPED teachers. When institutions prioritize teacher preparation and provide adequate support systems, they increase the likelihood that teachers will sustain their resilience and succeed in their professional roles.

Table 4
Level of Opportunities

Variable	Mean	SD	Description
1. Compassion for students with special needs	4.71	0.79	Very High
2. Critical thinking skills, the ability to plan, flexible availability, and a love for the work.	4.67	0.47	Very High
3. Understanding that special education students in a new environment continue to need assistance.	4.66	0.48	Very High
4. Practice an innovative mindset and adaptability.	4.48	0.63	Very High
5. Experience teaching multiple grade levels and commitment to students throughout their education	4.47	0.68	Very High

6. Provide inclusivity to alleviate the educational disparities among learners with special educational needs and developmental disabilities.	4.45	0.68	Very High
7. Improve students' self-determined behavior traits that signify the component of the policy, research, and curricular standards and teaching.	4.41	0.65	Very High
8. Understanding of the importance of consistency for special-needs students.	4.41	0.65	Very High
9. Experience managing challenges, circumstances, and achieving goals.	4.40	0.67	Very High
10. Create responsible, self-sufficient SPED learners who have the self-esteem, initiative, skills, and wisdom to continue individual development and seek knowledge.	4.38	0.81	Very High
11. Advanced knowledge of mental disorders and disabilities, such as helping students through a crisis	4.36	0.79	Very High
12. Familiarity with proper school protocol when students exhibit severe symptoms.	4.36	0.85	Very High
13. Monitor and evaluate classroom instruction and related activities in SPED, integrate and implement new and existing policies and guidelines of the SPED Program.	4.36	0.74	Very High
14. Demonstrate leadership in resourcing appropriate educational facilities/instructional aids.	4.34	0.66	Very High
15. Ability to form creative plans for improving each child's education	4.31	0.65	Very High
16. Assist students in making a seamless and successful transition to postsecondary settings	4.28	0.79	Very High
17. Skills needed to help disabled children with the challenges of their conditions.	4.24	0.63	Very High
18. Assist, initiate, and organize training programs for SPED innovative programs and projects for both learners and teachers.	4.34	0.66	Very High
19. Teacher preparation programs (TPPs) and professional development (PD)	4.12	0.80	High
20. Experience conducting Individualized Education Program meetings	3.38	0.86	Average

Overall level of Opportunities 4.37 0.46 Very High

Legend: 4.20 – 5.00 *Very High* 3.40 – 4.19-*High* 2.60 – 3.39-*Average*
1.80 – 2.59-*Low* 1.0 – 1.79-*Very Low*

As shown in Table 4, the perceived level of opportunities among SPED teachers was 4.37 (SD = 0.46), indicating a very high level of opportunities. This reflects the growing recognition of high-quality special education services and the shift toward inclusive education, which necessitates teachers to acquire specialized skills. Teachers reported strong opportunities in assisting LSENs in adapting to new environments (M = 4.66), innovating in service delivery (M = 4.48), teaching across grade levels (M = 4.47), promoting inclusiveness (M = 4.45), and enhancing behavioral traits in alignment with policy and curricular standards (M = 4.41). However, opportunities in professional development (M = 4.12) and particularly in conducting Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) (M = 3.38) remain limited, underscoring the need for further training. This finding supports Woulfin and Jones (2021), who observed that while professional development initiatives benefit SPED teachers, access to collaborative and context-specific opportunities is often lacking, affecting both teacher retention and service quality.

Table 5 Summary of the Level of Competencies, Resilience, and Opportunities of SPED Teachers

Variables	Mean	SD	Description
Competencies	4.36	0.46	Very High
Resilience	4.50	0.40	Very High
Opportunities	4.50	0.46	Very High

As presented in Table 5, the overall mean scores revealed very high levels of competencies (M = 4.36), resilience (M = 4.50), and opportunities (M = 4.37). These findings suggest that SPED teachers who are resilient and have access to professional growth opportunities are more effective in their roles, underscoring the importance of continually enhancing competencies and resilience. Pickle (2015) emphasized that teaching literacy to learners with difficulties requires teachers to possess deep, flexible knowledge of phonological, phonetic, and orthographic skills, along with reflexive capacity. Beyond technical expertise, resilience enables teachers to manage the adversities inherent in their profession, with evidence showing that pedagogical effectiveness is strengthened when transversal competencies are integrated into practice. Similarly, Moreno Lucas and Morales Rodríguez (2023) found that resilient teachers can mobilize personal resources and adopt adaptive behaviors, to succeed in stressful or adverse circumstances.

5.3 Correlational Analysis on the Level of Competencies, Resilience and Opportunities When Grouped by their Profile

To determine significant relationships between the respondents' profile and their levels of competencies, resilience, and opportunities, both the nature of the data and the appropriate statistical measures were considered. The profile variables included nominal data (e.g., gender, civil status, specialization) and ordinal data (e.g., age, years of teaching experience, highest educational attainment). For relationships involving dichotomous variables such as gender and civil status, the

Point-Biserial Correlation Coefficient was applied, as it measures the relationship between a binary and a continuous variable (Boccuzzo & Maron, 2017). Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) was employed to assess linear associations among continuous variables such as competencies, resilience, and opportunities, as it indicates both the strength and direction of relationships (Pamplona et al., 2024). Meanwhile, Kendall's tau-b was used to examine correlations between ordinal variables such as age, educational attainment, specialization, and years of SPED teaching.

Table 6 Profile of the Respondents and Level of Competencies

Profile	Correlation Coefficient	p-value	N	Decision	Result
Gender	0.035	0.796	58	Do not Reject H_0	Not significant
Civil Status	0.348**	0.007	58	Reject H_0	Significant
Age	0.166	0.104	58	Do not Reject H_0	Not significant
Higher Educational	0.086	0.413	58	Do not Reject H_0	Not significant
Specialization	-0.274*	0.011	58	Reject H_0	Significant
Years in Teaching	0.198	0.056	58	Do not Reject H_0	Not significant

As shown in Table 11, the results indicated no significant relationship between SPED teachers' competencies and gender ($p = 0.796$), age ($p = 0.104$), educational attainment ($p = 0.413$), or length of service ($p = 0.056$). This suggests that these demographic factors do not influence teachers' effectiveness in handling learners with special needs (LSENs). Both male and female teachers demonstrated very high competencies due to their commitment, patience, and professional dedication. These competencies were further strengthened through practice, training, and exposure to real-life teaching contexts, rather than formal academic advancement. These findings align with Zhu and Kaiser (2022), who found no relationship between age and teacher effectiveness, and with Kotherja and Hamzallari (2022), who likewise reported no significant link between competencies and specific socio-demographic profiles.

By contrast, civil status ($p = 0.007$) and specialization ($p = 0.011$) were found to influence competencies significantly. Married teachers often face competing demands from family and household responsibilities, which may affect their preparation and professional growth. In contrast, teachers with formal SPED specialization were more likely to exhibit higher levels of competence in addressing the needs of LSENs. These results highlight the importance of specialized training in strengthening teachers' instructional capacity. As Adeniyi and Olufemi-Adeniyi (2024) emphasized, the responsibility of preparing adequately for children with special needs rests not only on teachers but

also on stakeholders who must adjust educational systems to ensure inclusivity. Similarly, Siddique (2025) observed that factors such as teaching experience, salary, and performance ratings contribute to teacher effectiveness, underscoring the multifaceted nature of competence.

Table 7 Profile of the Respondents and Level of Resilience

Profile	Correlation Coefficient	p-value	N	Decision	Result
Gender	0.062	0.646	58	Do not Reject H_0	Not Significant
Civil Status	0.174	0.191	58	Do not Reject H_0	Not Significant
Age	0.164	0.109	58	Do not Reject H_0	Not Significant
Higher Educational	0.026	0.807	58	Do not Reject H_0	Not Significant
Specialization	-0.137	0.202	58	Do not Reject H_0	Not Significant
Years in Teaching	0.14	0.18	58	Do not Reject H_0	Not Significant

As presented in Table 7, the results show that SPED teachers' resilience has no significant relationship with any of their identified profile variables, with p-values as follows: gender ($p = 0.646$), civil status ($p = 0.191$), age ($p = 0.109$), educational attainment ($p = 0.807$), specialization ($p = 0.202$), and years of teaching ($p = 0.18$). This suggests that teachers' endurance and commitment to the profession are not determined by demographic factors, but may be influenced by intrinsic motivations, such as passion and a sense of purpose. SPED teachers in Roxas City exemplify this, demonstrating very high resilience through dedication to their vocation rather than external incentives.

Previous studies have presented mixed findings on resilience across genders. Begum et al. (2024) and Baguri et al. (2022) reported that female teachers displayed higher resilience levels than their male counterparts, with Ansary (2022) further noting women's advantage in the dimension of self-competence. In contrast, Ceglédi et al. (2022), in a study on elementary school teachers, found male teachers to be more resilient, particularly in managing burnout, stress, and academic optimism. Given the present results, the hypothesis that no significant relationship exists between SPED teachers' resilience and their demographic profile is accepted.

Table 8 Profile of the Respondents and Level of Opportunities

Profile	Correlation Coefficient	p-value	N	Decision	Result
Gender	-0.033	0.804	58	Reject H_0	Significant
Civil Status	0.203	0.126	58	Do not Reject H_0	Not Significant
Age	0.088	0.385	58	Do not Reject H_0	Not Significant
Higher Educational Attainment	0.025	0.813	58	Reject H_0	Significant
Specialization	-0.152	0.157	58	Do not Reject H_0	Not Significant
Years in Teaching	0.108	0.297	58	Do not Reject H_0	Not Significant

Table 8 indicates that SPED teachers' level of opportunities does not exhibit a significant relationship with any of their identified profile variables, as reflected in the computed p-values: gender ($p = 0.804$), civil status ($p = 0.126$), age ($p = 0.385$), educational attainment ($p = 0.813$), specialization ($p = 0.157$), and years in teaching ($p = 0.297$). These results suggest that opportunities for professional growth, such as engaging in innovations, managing diverse learners, attending training programs, and exercising independence in classroom improvement, are not influenced by teachers' demographic characteristics. Instead, opportunities appear to be equally accessible to all SPED teachers in Roxas City, reflecting an environment that promotes fairness, professional development, and career advancement regardless of personal background.

Although the present findings show no significant relationship, prior studies highlight the potential influence of educational attainment. Nishanian (2022) found that SPED teachers with advanced degrees demonstrated more substantial knowledge of evidence-based practices and greater effectiveness in their classroom application compared to those with only bachelor's degrees. Similarly, Lott (2021) reported that teachers with master's degrees were more likely to utilize evidence-based practices and adapt instruction to meet the unique needs of learners with disabilities. Nevertheless, the current results confirm that within the studied context, opportunities are equally distributed, thereby supporting the acceptance of the null hypothesis.

Table 9 Level of Competencies and Level of Resilience

Profile	Correlation Coefficient	p-value	N	Decision	Result
Competencies and Resilience	.684**	0.000	58	Reject H_0	Significant

Table 9 reveals that SPED teachers' levels of competencies and resilience were positively and significantly correlated ($p = 0.000$), indicating that improvements in one variable are associated with increases in the other. This suggests that as teachers enhance their competencies in instructional delivery, classroom management of LSENs, resource development, and assessment, they also strengthen their resilience and capacity to remain in the profession. Among SPED teachers in Roxas City, greater mastery of their craft fosters confidence, perseverance, and the ability to navigate professional challenges. Conversely, teachers who demonstrate adaptability and flexibility are more likely to refine their competencies, as resilience enables them to embrace challenges as opportunities for growth rather than setbacks.

These findings are consistent with prior studies. Mawila (2023) reported that SPED teachers with higher competencies, particularly in knowledge of disabilities and inclusive education, exhibited greater resilience, as they felt more capable of managing classroom challenges effectively. Similarly, Basckin et al. (2021) found that special education teachers' knowledge and application of evidence-based practices were positively linked to resilience, suggesting that well-developed professional competencies enhance teachers' preparedness to handle classroom difficulties. Thus, the null hypothesis stating no significant relationship between competencies and resilience was rejected.

Table 10 Level of Competencies and Level of Opportunities

Profile	Correlation Coefficient	p-value	N	Decision	Result
Competencies and Opportunities	.759**	0.000	58	Reject H_0	Significant

Table 10 shows that SPED teachers' levels of competencies and opportunities are positively and significantly correlated ($p = .000$), indicating that professional growth enhances receptiveness to opportunities. In contrast, exposure to opportunities further strengthens teachers' competencies. This suggests that SPED teachers in Roxas City, when provided with avenues for growth and development, demonstrate mastery of subject matter, advanced pedagogical skills, and the capacity to deliver meaningful learning outcomes. Teachers with very high competencies also tend to embrace opportunities as a means of addressing areas for improvement and reinforcing their strengths.

These findings align with Pazim et al. (2021), who reported that teachers with higher levels of competencies experienced greater job satisfaction due to their effectiveness in classroom management and inclusive practice implementation. Moreover, competencies play a crucial role in fostering collaboration with parents and colleagues, as teachers with strong interpersonal, communication, and

problem-solving skills are better positioned to support learners with disabilities. Thus, the null hypothesis stating no significant relationship between competencies and opportunities was rejected.

Table 11 Level of Resilience and Level of Opportunities

Profile	Correlation Coefficient	p-value	N	Decision	Result
Resilience and Opportunities	.684**	0.000	58	Reject H ₀	Significant

Table 11 reveals that SPED teachers' levels of resilience and opportunities are positively and significantly correlated ($p = .000$). This suggests that as teachers demonstrate greater resilience, they also become more receptive to professional opportunities. Conversely, as they engage in growth-enhancing opportunities, their resilience is strengthened. In Roxas City, SPED teachers are provided with leadership roles, professional development activities, independence to innovate, and support in implementing instructional interventions for diverse learners. These experiences foster confidence, self-esteem, and morale, allowing teachers to embrace challenges with determination and adaptability.

These findings align with Bonner (2023) and Jackson and Parker (2023) Who established a positive relationship between resilience and job satisfaction among SPED teachers, noting that higher resilience increases both satisfaction and retention. Similarly, access to professional development and career advancement opportunities has been shown to contribute to satisfaction and long-term commitment in the profession (Padillo et al., 2021). Thus, resilience and opportunities are mutually reinforcing, confirming the rejection of the null hypothesis.

5.5 Comparative Analysis on the Level of Competencies, Resilience, and Opportunities When Grouped by their Profile

This section presents the comparative analysis of SPED teachers' levels of competencies, resilience, and opportunities when classified according to their demographic and professional profiles. The analysis aims to determine whether significant differences exist across variables such as gender, civil status, age, highest educational attainment, specialization, and years of teaching in SPED.

Table 12 Differences Among HEA, Age, Specialization, and Years in Teaching SPED and the Teachers' Competencies

Profile	Mean	N	F-value	p-value	Decision	Result			
HEA									
Bachelor's Degree	4.27	17	0.571	0.568	Do not reject H _o	Not Significant			
Master's With Units	4.34	23							
Master's Degree	4.46	18							
		N=58							
Age									
25 yrs. old and below	4.13	12	1.075	0.378	Do not reject H _o	Not Significant			
26-30 yrs. old	4.36	26							
31-35 yrs. old	4.30	6							
36-40 yrs. Old	4.58	5							
41 yrs. And above	4.55	9							
		N= 58							
Specialization									
SPED	4.48	43	7.129	0.000	Reject H _o	Significant			
Gen. Ed	3.93	9							
Social Worker	4.37	2							
TLE									
Early Childhood	3.150	2							
Education	4.75	2							
		N= 58							
Years in Teaching									
SPED			1.696	0.179	Do not reject H _o	Not Significant			
5 yrs and below	4.19	26							
6 yrs. - 11 yrs	4.47	18							
12 yrs. - 14 yrs.	4.6	6							
15 yrs. - above	4.44	8							
		N= 58							

As presented in Table 12, results revealed no significant difference in SPED teachers' level of competencies when grouped according to higher educational attainment ($p = 0.568$) and age ($p = 0.378$), suggesting that neither postgraduate studies nor age determines competency levels. This aligns with Mata and Tarroja (2022), who also found no significant difference in competencies across educational attainment. However, it contradicts Josef et al. (2020), who reported that younger teachers

exhibited higher competencies. Similarly, years of teaching experience showed no significant difference ($p = 0.179$), confirming Buchner and Proyer's (2020) findings in Austria, although Yeo et al. (2019) in Singapore observed higher competencies among more experienced teachers. These findings imply that in Roxas City, SPED teachers—whether novice or experienced, young or old—maintain consistently high competencies due to rigorous pre-service training, seminars, and contextualized learning experiences.

However, specialization was found to have a significant effect ($p = 0.000$), indicating that SPED teachers with formal training in special education were more competent than those from other fields. This supports the studies of Byrd and Alexander (2020) and Puspasari and Widyaston (2020), which reported higher competencies among teachers who specialized in specific disability categories. These findings underscore the importance of pre-service preparation in special education, as specialized knowledge in disabilities, pedagogy, and intervention strategies equips teachers with the competencies essential for addressing the diverse needs of learners with special educational needs. Therefore, the null hypothesis regarding specialization was rejected.

Table 13 Differences Between Gender and Civil Status in the Resilience of SPED Teachers

Variables	Mean	N	t-value	p-value	Decision	Result
Gender						
Male	4.42	5	-0.462	0.646	Do not reject H _o	Not significant
Female	4.51	53				
Civil Status						
Single	4.43	32	-1.323	0.191	Do not reject H _o	Not significant
Married	4.57	26				

As presented in Table 13, the results show no significant difference in SPED teachers' level of resilience when grouped by gender ($p = 0.646$) and civil status ($p = 0.191$). This indicates that both male and female teachers, as well as single and married teachers in Roxas City, demonstrate comparable resilience in facing professional challenges. Such resilience appears to stem not from demographic attributes but from professional preparation, collegial support, and school leadership, which equip teachers with the confidence and adaptability to handle setbacks. These findings suggest that resilience among SPED teachers is a function of intrinsic motivation and supportive environments rather than gender or marital status. Accordingly, the null hypotheses were accepted.

These results contrast with previous studies. Lo (2017) found that male SPED teachers in Hong Kong exhibited greater resilience than females, while Kavgaci (2022) reported that married SPED teachers in Turkey demonstrated higher resilience than their single counterparts. The present findings, however,

emphasize that in the Roxas City context, resilience is cultivated equally across gender and civil status groups, reflecting a more inclusive and supportive professional environment.

Table 14
Differences between HEA, Age, Specialization and
and Years in Teaching SPED

Profile	Mean	N	F-value	p-value	Decision	Result
HEA						
Bachelor's Degree	4.511	17	0.499	0.610	Do not reject H _o	Not Significant
Master's With Units	4.439	23				
Master's Degree	4.563	18				
		N=58				
Age						
25 yrs. old and below	4.32	12	1.164	0.337	Do not reject H _o	Not Significant
26-30 yrs. old	4.55	26				
31-35 yrs. old	4.37	6				
36-40 yrs. Old	4.58	5				
41 yrs. And above	4.62	9				
		N= 58				
Specialization						
SPED	4.54	43	0.793	0.535	Do not reject H _o	Not Significant
Gen. Ed	3.39	9				
Social	4.42	2				
Worker/Buss Add.						
TLE	4.10	2				
Early Childhood Education	4.55	2				
		N= 58				
Years in Teaching						
SPED			0.923	0.436	Do not reject H _o	Not significant
5 yrs and below	4.41	26				
6 yrs. - 11 yrs	4.55	18				
12 yrs. - 14 yrs.	4.67	6				
15 yrs. - above	4.51	8				
		N= 58				

Findings reveal no significant differences in SPED teachers' resilience when grouped according to higher educational attainment ($p = 0.610$), age ($p = 0.337$), specialization ($p = 0.535$), and years of teaching experience ($p = 0.535$). This indicates that resilience is not primarily shaped by academic

credentials, age, or length of service but is instead cultivated through personal experiences and professional realities that enable teachers to adapt, endure, and thrive in challenging contexts. The results suggest that both novice and veteran SPED teachers, regardless of specialization or advanced studies, display comparable confidence and coping abilities in managing the demands of the profession. These findings contrast with Sadziak et al. (2018), who reported significant differences in resilience across SPED specializations in the United States, but are consistent with those who found no significant differences based on teaching experience in Taiwan(Wu et al., 2025). Overall, the results indicate that resilience among SPED teachers in Roxas City is widely shared across demographic and professional profiles, highlighting the importance of contextual support and intrinsic motivation over structural factors.

5.6 Significant Differences in the Profile Among Opportunities

Table 15
t-Test Result for Differences Between Gender and Civil Status

Variables	Mean	N	t-value	p-value	Decision	Result
Gender						
Male	4.42	5	0.25	0.804	Do not reject H ₀	Not Significant
Female	4.37	53				
Civil Status						
Single	4.28	32	-1.554	0.126	Reject H ₀	Significant
Married	4.47	26				

The findings in Table 15 indicate that there is no significant difference in SPED teachers' level of opportunities when grouped according to sex ($p = 0.804$), suggesting that both male and female teachers in Roxas City enjoy equal access to privileges, rights, and professional development. This reflects the city's emphasis on gender empowerment and equality in policies related to hiring, promotion, training, and recognition. These results are consistent with the studies of Ramli and Mohd Yusoff (2020) in Malaysia and Van Houtte (2017) in Belgium, both of which reported no significant differences in opportunities between male and female teachers. Consequently, the hypothesis regarding gender-based equality in opportunities is accepted.

Similarly, the results show no significant difference in opportunities when teachers are grouped according to civil status ($p = 0.126$), indicating that both single and married SPED teachers experience comparable opportunities in fulfilling their professional and personal responsibilities. Single teachers may have more time for professional growth, while married teachers often demonstrate strong time management and accountability in balancing their family and career responsibilities. However, this finding contradicts Mishra (2023), who found no significant difference in opportunities based on

marital status among teachers in India, thereby leading to the rejection of the hypothesis regarding civil status.

Table 16 ANOVA Results for Differences Between HEA, Age, Specialization, and Years in Teaching SPED

Profile	Mean	N	F-value	p-value	Decision	Result				
HEA										
Bachelor’s Degree	4.35	17	.205	.815	Do not reject H _o	Not Significant				
Master’s With Units	4.33	23								
Master’s Degree	4.42	18								
		N=58								
Age										
25 yrs. old and below	4.21	12	.590	.671	Do not reject H _o	Not Significant				
26-30 yrs. old	4.40	26								
31-35 yrs. old	4.35	6								
36-40 yrs. Old	4.34	5								
41 yrs. And above	4.51	9								
		N= 58								
Specialization										
SPED	4.43	43	2.904	.030	Reject H _o	Significant				
Gen. Ed	4.13	9								
Social Worker/Buss Add.	4.32	2								
TLE	3.62	2								
Early Childhood Education	4.77	2								
		N= 58								
Years in Teaching										
SPED			.789	.505	Do not reject H _o	Not Significant				
5 yrs and below	4.28	26								
6 yrs. - 11 yrs	4.41	18								
12 yrs. - 14 yrs.	4.58	6								
15 yrs. - above	4.39	8								
		N= 58								

The findings in Table 16 reveal no significant difference in SPED teachers' opportunities when grouped according to higher educational attainment ($p = 0.815$), age ($p = 0.671$), and years in teaching

($p = 0.505$). This suggests that teachers, regardless of their credentials, age, or experience, are provided equal access to professional growth opportunities, such as handling learners with disabilities, leading school activities, and attending training. These results emphasize the culture of continuous learning and equal participation among teachers in Roxas City. They are consistent with the findings of Istiarsyah et al. (2019) and Robinson et al. (2019). However, they contrast with Alfane (2020) and Cornelius et al. (2020), who reported age- and experience-based variations in opportunities.

By contrast, a significant difference emerged when teachers were grouped by specialization ($p = 0.030$), favoring those in Early Childhood Education who had greater opportunities for training and exposure. Teachers without SPED specialization were also given priority to enhance their competence in handling diverse disabilities. These findings align with Ayasrah (2017), who reported specialization-based differences in opportunities, while Sakalli Demirok (2018) observed mixed outcomes across areas of specialization.

1. Challenges Encountered by the Teachers in Handling LSENs

The challenges encountered by participants in teaching Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENs) are multifaceted and encompass several key areas.

These include learner-related challenges such as truancy, absenteeism, behavioral problems, and diverse needs; curriculum-related challenges like the lack of specific guides for certain disabilities and difficulties in modifying lessons to suit individual students; instruction-related issues including limited access to teaching resources, insufficient instructional time, managing behavioral problems, and addressing the varying needs of multiple learners simultaneously; and parental involvement-related challenges, notably parents' denial of their children's disabilities and external factors such as socio-economic status, which affect attendance and discipline. Teachers also emphasized the importance of maintaining passion, patience, and a positive mindset to cope with these difficulties, often seeking support from colleagues, training, and prayer to overcome obstacles.

2. Coping Mechanisms

The participants employed a variety of coping mechanisms to manage the stresses involved in teaching LSENs. Many teachers relied on maintaining a positive outlook and nurturing their passion for work as foundational strategies to stay motivated amid challenges. They also emphasized the importance of taking breaks and engaging in relaxation activities such as prayer, social interactions, and rewarding themselves to alleviate stress. Seeking support from colleagues, mentors, and professional networks was a common approach, helping teachers share strategies and gain reassurance. Furthermore, pursuing professional growth through attending training, workshops, and further studies boosted their confidence and skills, thereby reducing feelings of helplessness. Several teachers also adopted active coping strategies, including engaging in hobbies, resting, or watching television, to recharge. Additionally, they employed problem-focused techniques by analyzing the root causes of difficulties and searching for practical solutions, which empowered them to manage classroom challenges more

effectively. Overall, maintaining a positive attitude, continuous learning, collaboration, and self-care were key strategies that enabled teachers to cope effectively with the demands of teaching LSENs.

6. CONCLUSION

The conclusions of the study were drawn from the findings obtained during the investigation. Results revealed that SPED teachers in Roxas City demonstrate a high level of competence and preparedness in teaching learners with special needs, as they possess the necessary knowledge and skills to manage diverse learners with exceptionalities. They are mindful of the varying needs and abilities of their students, ensuring that learning experiences are responsive and inclusive. Nevertheless, the study highlights the necessity of a specialized curriculum for SPED learners that will provide teachers with structured guidance on the programs and services offered, while also reinforcing the principle of equalizing educational opportunities for all learners with special needs.

The study further established that SPED teachers exhibit greater resilience when they feel supported and recognize that their efforts have a positive influence on student outcomes. Opportunities for professional development remain abundant, particularly in enhancing teachers' capacity to design and implement Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs). Such training fosters collaboration among teachers, parents, school administrators, related service providers, and students to improve educational outcomes. Equally important is the provision of clear policies and capacity-building initiatives that support SPED teachers' professional growth and well-being. Ultimately, SPED teachers who are both competent and resilient, and who are afforded opportunities for continuous development, are more capable of demonstrating perseverance, patience, and dedication in addressing the diverse needs of learners with special needs in Roxas City. In response, strategic interventions were formulated to address the challenges identified in the study.

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