

SELF-EFFICACY AND LEVEL OF MENTAL PREPAREDNESS OF FILIPINO J1 TEACHERS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM IN FLORIDA, USA: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY

Teodiosa A. Brabante
Dondon Buensuceso, PhD

Graduate School, FEU Roosevelt, Cainta, Rizal Philippines

Corresponding author's email: brabanteteodiosa@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and mental preparedness among Filipino J-1 exchange teachers assigned to self-contained special education classrooms in selected public schools in Jacksonville, Florida. A quantitative correlational research design was employed, involving 31 Filipino exchange teachers currently teaching learners with special needs. Data were collected using a researcher-developed survey that measured teachers' self-efficacy and mental preparedness across instructional, behavioral, emotional, and professional domains. Descriptive statistics were used to determine respondents' profiles and levels of self-efficacy and mental preparedness, while Pearson's correlation coefficient was utilized to examine the relationship between the two variables, including analyses based on demographic characteristics such as age, gender, civil status, and years of teaching experience. Results indicated that respondents demonstrated a very high level of self-efficacy ($M = 4.41$) and a high level of mental preparedness ($M = 4.26$). Further analysis revealed a very strong and statistically significant positive relationship between teacher self-efficacy and mental preparedness ($r = 0.7637$, $p < .001$). This relationship remained significant across all demographic groupings. The findings suggest that higher levels of teacher self-efficacy are associated with greater mental preparedness in self-contained special education settings. The study concludes that interventions aimed at strengthening teacher self-efficacy may enhance mental preparedness, resilience, and instructional effectiveness among Filipino exchange teachers working with learners with special needs.

INTRODUCTION

Special education evolved from a system that once excluded children with disabilities to one that recognized their right to equitable and meaningful learning. Landmark legislation such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) helped establish inclusive education as a global priority, requiring teachers to address a wide range of learning needs, including autism, ADHD, intellectual disabilities, and sensory impairments. The global need was enormous. The World Health Organization estimated that more than 240 million children worldwide lived with disabilities, and about 1 in 100 were diagnosed with autism. These numbers highlighted the urgency of developing strong teaching models and support systems that truly met students where they were. As inclusive and self-contained classrooms continued to expand, understanding how teacher preparedness, both professional and psychological, shaped student outcomes became essential to advancing educational equity.

The United States has long relied on self-contained classrooms to support learners with special needs, but a persistent shortage of qualified special education teachers has made staffing these programs increasingly difficult. As the number of children diagnosed with disabilities such as autism, ADHD, and other developmental or behavioral disorders continues to rise, the demand for skilled educators has outpaced the supply of local teachers. Many American teachers avoid special education roles due to high emotional and behavioral demands, heavy caseloads, burnout, and the complex responsibilities involved in managing individualized education plans (IEPs) and legal compliance. This shortage pushed school districts to look beyond domestic hiring and recruit internationally.

One major pathway has been the J-1 Visa Teacher Exchange Program, which allows foreign educators to work in U.S. schools. Districts such as Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville, Florida, have increasingly turned to Filipino teachers, who are recognized for their strong work ethic, cultural adaptability, resilience, and deep commitment to student success. Their high self-efficacy and mental preparedness make them especially effective in the demanding environment of special education. Ultimately, international teachers, particularly Filipino educators, have become essential in filling critical staffing gaps while enriching U.S. classrooms with diverse perspectives and values rooted in compassion, perseverance, and integrity.

Teaching in a self-contained classroom required educators to manage complex behavioral, academic, and emotional needs, making self-efficacy and mental preparedness essential components of effective practice. Teachers with high self-efficacy, those who believed strongly in their ability to support diverse learners, were more confident in implementing individualized strategies, responding to challenging behaviors, and sustaining patience and consistency. At the same time, mental preparedness equipped teachers to handle the emotional intensity, unpredictability, and daily demands of working with children who required specialized support.

Together, these two factors might significantly influence the quality of instruction and the overall learning environment. When teachers felt capable and emotionally ready, they were more resilient, more adaptive, and more likely to remain committed to their roles. This led to better student engagement, stronger progress toward individualized goals, and a more stable, supportive classroom climate. In self-contained settings where

students depended heavily on structured routines, individualized attention, and consistent emotional support, teacher self-efficacy and mental preparedness directly shaped student outcomes and the success of special education programs.

Background of Study

In recent years, public schools in the United States have increasingly relied on international exchange teachers, including educators from the Philippines, to address persistent shortages of qualified special education teachers. Filipino educators participating in the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program have played a significant role in filling these gaps, particularly in high-need instructional settings. However, the transition from teaching in the Philippines to teaching special education in the United States presents substantial professional and personal challenges.

Drawing from five years of professional experience teaching students with special needs in U.S. public schools, the researcher observed that prior teaching experience in the Philippines, while beneficial, did not fully prepare international educators for the complexities of special education within the U.S. context. Differences in instructional approaches, classroom environments, behavioral expectations, and legal frameworks required considerable adjustment. This transition extended beyond pedagogical adaptation and entailed a process of sustained professional and personal growth, requiring educators to develop mental, emotional, and physical resilience to meet the demands of their roles.

Many Filipino exchange teachers are assigned to self-contained special education classrooms, where they work with students requiring intensive, individualized support. These positions demand not only content knowledge and instructional competence but also adaptability to unfamiliar educational systems and cultural contexts. Although Filipino J-1 teachers contribute meaningfully to mitigating staffing shortages, they frequently encounter challenges related to understanding state and federal standards, managing moderate to severe student behaviors, navigating limited resources, and addressing immigration-related concerns. Despite these difficulties, many demonstrate sustained commitment to their students, supported by mentorship, collegial collaboration, and professional development opportunities provided by schools and sponsoring organizations.

Beyond their academic qualifications, Filipino exchange teachers bring qualities such as empathy, patience, and a strong sense of professional purpose. Their commitment often extends beyond instructional responsibilities to include building meaningful relationships with students and families, advocating for inclusive educational practices, and fostering learning environments in which students feel valued and supported. This relational and human-centered approach aligns closely with foundational principles of special education in the United States, where consistency, emotional connection, and individualized support are regarded as essential components of effective instruction.

Nevertheless, the transition into U.S. special education settings remains complex and demanding. Teaching in self-contained classrooms requires more than subject-matter expertise; it necessitates psychological readiness, emotional stability, and the capacity to respond to diverse and intensive student needs. Filipino exchange teachers

frequently navigate unfamiliar institutional systems, legal mandates, and cultural expectations, which may influence their confidence, effectiveness, and perceived readiness to teach. These professional realities raise critical questions regarding the extent to which international teachers feel prepared for their roles and the factors that influence their success.

Teacher self-efficacy is defined as educators' beliefs in their ability to implement effective instructional strategies, manage classrooms, and engage students has been identified as a significant factor influencing instructional practices and student outcomes. Existing literature consistently associates higher levels of teacher self-efficacy with adaptive instructional decision-making, increased resilience, enhanced student engagement, and improved academic achievement. As such, self-efficacy represents a foundational construct for understanding teacher performance, particularly within the demanding context of special education. However, limited empirical research has examined the relationship between self-efficacy and preparedness among Filipino exchange teachers working in U.S. special education settings.

This study examined the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and mental preparedness among Filipino J-1 teachers employed in selected public schools in Florida, United States. In this study, teacher self-efficacy referred to educators' beliefs in their capacity to manage classrooms, deliver effective instruction, and actively engage students. Caseldo (2023) found that teachers with high levels of self-efficacy tend to demonstrate greater confidence, sustained motivation, and a constructive approach to professional challenges. For Filipino exchange teachers, cultivating self-efficacy is particularly critical due to the high demands associated with teaching students with special needs. Mental preparedness, in contrast, refers to teachers' readiness to address the emotional, psychological, and behavioral challenges inherent in special education instruction. This construct includes the ability to remain composed under pressure, respond flexibly to unpredictable situations, and maintain emotionally supportive learning environments. Teachers who demonstrate strong mental preparedness are more likely to exhibit resilience, responsiveness, and instructional effectiveness. Accordingly, this study sought to explore the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and mental preparedness and to determine whether these constructs influence one another in meaningful ways.

Empirical literature further supports the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and mental preparedness in special education contexts. Le (2025) reported that special education teachers' preparedness to address emotional and behavioral disorders significantly predicted higher levels of self-efficacy and lower levels of burnout. Similarly, Robinson (2022) identified a strong positive association between preparedness to support student mental health and teachers' mental health self-efficacy, emphasizing the role of training, administrative support, and collaboration in fostering both preparedness and confidence. Nsiah, Baidoo, and Setorglo (2025) found that pre-service teachers' exposure to diverse learners, practicum experiences, and skill-building activities enhanced both readiness and self-efficacy in inclusive and self-contained settings. Emotional readiness and empathy emerged as significant predictors of teacher preparedness. Abaya (2025) further demonstrated that educators with higher self-efficacy and mental preparedness were better able to manage stress and the emotional demands of special education teaching. Additionally, Johnson and Jones (2021) reported that teachers with formal special education credentials and extensive experience exhibited higher levels of both

mental preparedness and self-efficacy, underscoring the importance of structured training and practical experience.

Despite the increasing presence of Filipino exchange teachers in U.S. special education classrooms, limited research has examined how their confidence and mental readiness influence teaching effectiveness and professional resilience. Understanding this relationship is essential for strengthening teacher support systems, improving training and mentorship programs, and enhancing educational outcomes for students with special needs. Insights from this study may inform schools, districts, and sponsoring organizations as they design targeted professional development opportunities and create supportive environments that empower international educators.

Overall, the experiences of Filipino J-1 teachers illustrate that their transition into U.S. special education extends well beyond the acquisition of new instructional strategies. The process involves adaptation to distinct cultural, legal, and behavioral frameworks, highlighting the importance of psychological readiness and professional confidence. The reviewed literature consistently affirms that emotional, cognitive, and professional preparedness are critical to teacher effectiveness, resilience, and well-being. By examining the relationship between self-efficacy and mental preparedness, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how Filipino exchange teachers—and special educators more broadly—can be supported in delivering high-quality, inclusive education to

Recent Situation of Learners with Disabilities in Jacksonville, Florida

This literature review explored the current educational landscape for learners with disabilities in Jacksonville, Florida. It highlighted the services provided by Duval County Public Schools (DCPS), recent policy changes, mental health initiatives, and community support programs. Duval County Public Schools (DCPS) serves over 20,000 students with disabilities across more than 200 schools. The district offered a continuum of services, including general education classrooms, resource rooms, self-contained special education classrooms, specialized day schools, and hospital/homebound programs. These services were tailored through Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) to meet the unique needs of each student.

The Exceptional Education and Student Services (EE/SS) department within DCPS coordinated support for students with disabilities, gifted learners, and other eligible students. The department emphasizes collaboration between educators, families, and students to ensure inclusive and effective learning environments. Recent policy changes in Florida required all students, including those with disabilities, to receive the same high school diploma, eliminating the previous certificate of completion option. This shift raised concerns among families, particularly for students in self-contained or modified academic programs.

The Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System (FDLRS) supported educators and families by offering professional development, screenings, and access to resources on disability awareness and instructional strategies. Despite these efforts, challenges persisted. Staffing shortages in special education, inconsistent access to culturally responsive mental health services, and policy shifts affecting graduation pathways continued to impact the educational experience of students with disabilities. Advocacy and community engagement remained essential to ensure equitable, inclusive,

and high-quality education for all learners.

Policies and Legal Framework for Hiring Filipino J-1 Teachers in Florida, USA

The legal foundation for hiring J-1 Filipino teachers in Florida was primarily based on the U.S. Department of State's Exchange Visitor Program. Under this program, the J-1 visa allowed qualified foreign educators to teach full-time in accredited U.S. primary and secondary schools. The visa was initially valid for three years, with the possibility of extending another two years to make it up to five years. To qualify, teachers must hold a degree equivalent to a U.S. bachelor's, have at least two years of full-time teaching experience, demonstrate English proficiency, and be of good moral character. They must also be currently employed as teachers or have recently completed an advanced degree.

In Florida, the state-specific policy was outlined in Rule 6A-4.002(6)(c) of the Florida Administrative Code. This rule defines an exchange teacher as one who teaches in Florida under a reciprocal arrangement with a foreign government or recognized organization. These teachers were issued a temporary, non-renewable teaching certificate that is valid only for the employing school district and the specific subject area assigned. This certificate allowed them to legally teach in Florida while participating in the exchange program.

The Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) played a key role in implementing the J-1 teacher program. As an official sponsor under the U.S. Department of State, FLDOE facilitated the recruitment and placement of exchange teachers. The program typically spans three years, with the option to extend for one or two additional years. Importantly, FLDOE did not charge any sponsorship or participation fees to recruited teachers. It also collaborated with approved third-party organizations to assist in recruitment and provides a financial disclosure statement that outlines average salaries, deductions, and living costs in Florida. Exchange teachers must apply for a temporary teaching certificate through the Bureau of Educator Certification.

For Filipino educators, specific guidance included holding a valid PRC license, having at least two years of full-time teaching experience, and being currently employed or recently active in the teaching profession. They must also obtain a credential evaluation from NACES, a recognized agency such as WES or ECE. A job offer from a U.S. school or sponsorship through a designated organization is required. Additional documentation includes transcripts, diplomas, certificates of employment, a passport, NBI clearance, and, optionally, English proficiency test scores like IELTS or TOEFL.

Several Florida school districts actively hired J-1 teachers, including Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville, as well as districts in Miami-Dade, Broward, Hillsborough, Orange, and Palm Beach counties. These districts often seek educators in high-demand areas such as Special Education, STEM subjects, and Bilingual Education, and they value the cultural exchange that international teachers bring to their classrooms.

Ensuring Ethical Exchange Through the Philippine Framework for J-1 Teacher Deployment

The Philippine government, through the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) and the Exchange Visitor Program (EVP) Committee, established clear policies and

procedures regarding the deployment of Filipino teachers under the J-1 visa program. These policies aimed to protect the welfare of Filipino educators while ensuring compliance with international agreements and national priorities. The DMW (formerly POEA) regulates the recruitment and deployment of Filipino workers abroad, including teachers participating in the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program. According to the Revised POEA Rules and Regulations, the government prioritized the protection of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), ensuring they are deployed only to countries that uphold their rights. The rules emphasized ethical recruitment, proper documentation, and the need for Filipino workers to possess the necessary skills and qualifications for overseas employment. Recruitment must be conducted through licensed agencies, as direct hiring is generally prohibited unless the employer falls under specific exemptions, such as the diplomatic corps or international organizations.

Filipino teachers who joined the J-1 program must undergo registration and a Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS) conducted by the EVP Committee through the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO). This seminar educated participants about the conditions of the program, their rights, and responsibilities. As part of the registration, teachers submitted documents such as their passport, J-1 visa, DS-2019 form, and a notarized affidavit of undertaking. This affidavit confirmed their understanding that the J-1 program is for cultural exchange and not for immigration; that they are required to return to the Philippines for two years after completing the program.

The two-year home residency requirement was a critical component of the J-1 visa for Filipino teachers. Because teaching was listed under the Philippine Skills List, most Filipino educators were subject to this requirement under Section 212(e) of the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act. This means they needed to return to the Philippines for at least two years before applying for certain U.S. visas like H-1B or permanent residency. While the Philippine government may issue a No Objection Statement (NOS) to waive this requirement, it was only granted under highly meritorious circumstances, such as research or professional work that aligns with national interests. Applications for NOS were carefully evaluated by agencies like the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and Department of Health (DOH).

In summary, the Philippines supported the participation of its teachers in the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program as a means of professional and cultural development. However, it enforces strict compliance with recruitment regulations, emphasizes the temporary nature of the program, and requires teachers to return home after their tenure to contribute to national development. The government also provides mechanisms to ensure the safety, welfare, and reintegration of returning teachers.

Mental Preparedness in Teaching Children with Special Needs

Mental preparedness in teaching learners with special needs refers to a teacher's emotional, psychological, and cognitive readiness to effectively manage the complex demands of special education. It encompasses the ability to remain calm under pressure, regulate emotions, respond appropriately to diverse behavioral and learning challenges, and sustain a structured, supportive, and self-contained classroom environment. Teachers who demonstrate a high level of mental preparedness exhibit resilience, empathy, and adaptability—competencies that are essential when working with students who require individualized instruction, consistent behavioral support, and emotional care.

In special education contexts, mental preparedness plays a critical role in enabling teachers to meet students' academic and socio-emotional needs while maintaining their own well-being and professional effectiveness.

The literature further characterizes mental preparedness as a multidimensional construct closely aligned with mental well-being, including self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, and a sense of purpose. These dimensions are shaped not only by individual characteristics but also by institutional and interpersonal support systems, particularly in transnational teaching contexts. Research on migrant and international educators emphasizes that successful acculturation and sustained professional functioning depend heavily on access to culturally attuned mental health resources, inclusive professional environments, and supportive school leadership. Thus, mental preparedness is conceptualized not as an exclusively individual attribute, but as an outcome influenced by the interaction between personal coping capacities and the broader educational ecosystem.

Empirical studies focusing on Filipino teachers in the United States provide valuable insight into how mental preparedness is developed and sustained within special education settings. Bantayan-Tanner and Gallaron (2025) documented Filipino teachers' experiences of managing stress and maintaining mental well-being, noting the widespread use of culturally grounded self-care practices such as prayer, mindfulness, and community engagement. These practices foster emotional stability and resilience, which are especially vital for teachers in self-contained special education classrooms. However, the study also revealed that the absence of culturally responsive institutional systems heightened stress levels and reduced job satisfaction, underscoring the importance of organizational support in sustaining mental preparedness. Related qualitative and phenomenological research reinforces these findings. Gamez-Catiis (2024), in a study of Filipino special education teachers under the J-1 visa program in California, found that while participants experienced notable professional growth, they also encountered significant emotional and psychological challenges during their adaptation to the U.S. education system. The study emphasized the need for culturally sensitive training and continuous institutional support to enhance teachers' mental readiness and confidence. Similarly, Macapagong, Geroso, and Maguate (2023) explored the lived experiences of Filipino teachers in Arizona under J-1 and H-1B visa programs, highlighting emotional strain, cultural adjustment difficulties, and feelings of isolation during the initial years abroad. Teachers who engaged in intentional self-care practices and received strong community support, however, demonstrated greater mental resilience, reinforcing the view that mental preparedness is shaped by both individual coping strategies and external support systems.

More recent research conducted between 2022 and 2025 has expanded the understanding of mental preparedness among special education teachers working in culturally diverse, high-needs, and transnational environments. Dela Cruz and Santiago (2023) found that Filipino special education teachers working abroad relied heavily on emotional regulation skills and culturally familiar support networks, with strong ties to Filipino communities enhancing resilience and adaptability during behavioral crises in self-contained classrooms. Patel and Ramirez (2024) similarly reported that teachers in high-needs U.S. districts who exhibited higher levels of mental preparedness were better able to manage emotional exhaustion and sustain instructional quality. Their findings

highlighted the significance of structured mentorship, trauma-informed training, and consistent administrative support—factors particularly relevant for international teachers navigating new educational systems. These patterns were echoed in Villanueva and Torres' (2025) mixed-methods study of Filipino J-1 teachers in Texas and Florida. The authors found that proactive coping strategies such as reflective journaling, peer collaboration, and spiritual practices significantly improved teachers' mental readiness, while strong institutional support reduced stress and strengthened confidence in addressing complex student needs. Johnson and Miller (2022) further emphasized the role of targeted professional development, demonstrating that teachers who received training in behavior management and crisis intervention reported greater emotional resilience and felt less overwhelmed in self-contained settings. Complementing these findings, Reyes and Bautista (2024) noted that Filipino educators in international exchange programs often struggled with cultural adjustment stress and homesickness, but those who received strong support from school leaders and fellow Filipino teachers experienced greater emotional stability and teaching confidence.

Additional evidence supports the role of cultural grounding and systemic support in mental preparedness. Huynh et al. (2020) found that culturally grounded self-care practices, such as spiritual reflection and communal bonding, enhanced emotional stability among migrant teachers, suggesting that mental preparedness extends beyond professional training to include cultural and emotional resources. Conversely, Cleofas and Mijares (2022) observed that Filipino teachers in Massachusetts frequently encountered inconsistent institutional support, contributing to heightened stress levels and diminished job satisfaction. Their findings call for the development of culturally responsive systems that acknowledge and address the unique needs of migrant educators. Broader research in special education further situates mental preparedness as a foundational component of teaching effectiveness. Mathur, Spurlock, and Wolf (2025) emphasized that mental health and emotional well-being are essential to effective instruction, particularly in classrooms characterized by significant emotional and behavioral challenges. Teachers who are mentally prepared are better equipped to recognize early signs of emotional distress in students, implement appropriate interventions, and foster trusting, safe learning environments. Ronfeldt (2021) similarly argued that teacher preparation and retention are closely linked to teaching effectiveness, noting that educators who receive extensive clinical experiences and sustained mentorship during training report higher levels of mental readiness and professional persistence.

Taken together, these studies provide a comprehensive and integrated understanding of the factors influencing mental preparedness among Filipino J-1 teachers in U.S. special education classrooms. The literature consistently demonstrates that mental preparedness is shaped by emotional resilience, cultural identity, professional competence, and institutional support. These factors interact to influence teachers' ability to manage the demands of self-contained special education settings while sustaining personal well-being and instructional effectiveness. Building on this body of work, the present study seeks to contribute to the growing literature on international special education teachers by examining mental preparedness as a key construct and offering insights that may inform culturally responsive support systems and evidence-based interventions in U.S. public schools.

Self-Efficacy in Teaching Learners with Special Needs

Self-efficacy in teaching learners with special needs refers to a teacher's belief in their capacity to effectively instruct, manage, and support students with diverse physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral disabilities. Grounded in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1997), teacher self-efficacy reflects educators' beliefs about their ability to organize and execute actions required to achieve desired instructional outcomes. In special education contexts, this belief system plays a critical role in shaping how teachers approach instructional challenges, persist through difficulties, and adapt strategies to meet individualized student needs. As a multifaceted construct, teacher self-efficacy has been consistently linked to instructional quality, classroom management, student outcomes, and teacher well-being in both self-contained and inclusive settings within the United States.

Theoretical and empirical literature underscores self-efficacy as a central component of teacher agency, particularly in high-demand instructional environments such as special education. Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020) emphasized that self-efficacy influences teachers' motivation, self-regulation, and persistence, which are essential when addressing complex behavioral, emotional, and instructional demands. Teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to maintain effective classroom management, implement evidence-based instructional practices, collaborate with families and specialists, and foster meaningful learning experiences for students with disabilities. Their confidence allows them to remain resilient in the face of academic and behavioral challenges, thereby contributing to improved educational outcomes.

Empirical studies provide substantial evidence that external support mechanisms significantly enhance teacher self-efficacy in special education contexts. Ruble et al. (2020) found that teachers working with students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) reported higher self-efficacy and lower stress levels when provided with targeted consultation through the Collaborative Model for Promoting Competence and Success (COMPASS). These findings suggest that structured professional support systems can strengthen teachers' instructional confidence and effectiveness, particularly in highly specialized instructional settings.

Professional preparation and credentialing have also been identified as key determinants of teacher self-efficacy. Johnson and Jones (2021) reported that special educators with valid credentials demonstrated significantly higher self-efficacy than those teaching under provisional permits, indicating that formal training and certification contribute not only to skill acquisition but also to stronger beliefs in instructional competence. Similarly, Le (2025) found that among teachers working with students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD), self-efficacy was a strong predictor of job satisfaction and reduced burnout, particularly when teachers had access to relevant training and mental health resources.

Research further highlights the importance of teaching context in shaping self-efficacy. Sharma and Sokal (2020) emphasized that self-efficacy is particularly salient in inclusive and self-contained environments, where teachers must respond to varied learner needs and complex classroom dynamics. Consistent with this, Paju (2021) found that teachers with higher self-efficacy were more likely to adopt student-centered instructional approaches, engage in continuous professional development, and persevere

through challenges associated with teaching learners with special needs. Park (2022) similarly reported that teachers with strong self-efficacy demonstrated greater commitment to both inclusive and self-contained practices, particularly when working with students with ASD. In contrast, Petersen and Koehler (2021) observed that teachers with lower self-efficacy tended to be more apprehensive about implementing special education practices, especially in the absence of sufficient experience, training, and institutional support.

Several studies highlight the role of reinforcement, mentoring, and experiential learning in strengthening teacher self-efficacy. Savolainen et al. (2022) found that teachers who received positive reinforcement, constructive feedback, and adequate instructional resources were more likely to sustain high levels of self-efficacy in special education classrooms. De Boer et al. (2020) further emphasized that focused professional development programs targeting differentiated instruction, inclusive pedagogy, and classroom management significantly enhance teachers' confidence. Before entering full-time teaching roles, hands-on experiences such as inclusive teaching internships and classroom simulations have been shown to build self-efficacy by allowing teachers to practice and refine their instructional skills in realistic settings (Loreman et al., 2021).

Institutional and administrative support also play a pivotal role in sustaining teacher self-efficacy. McLeskey et al. (2022) highlighted the influence of school leadership in creating environments that empower teachers through access to teaching assistants, specialized resources, and opportunities for continuous training. Schwab et al. (2021) added that emotional support, manageable workloads, and strong professional relationships reduce burnout and further reinforce teachers' beliefs in their instructional capabilities. These organizational factors are especially critical in special education settings, where emotional labor and instructional demands are high.

Systematic and large-scale reviews further reinforce the centrality of self-efficacy in special education. Havik's (2025) systematic review of nine peer-reviewed studies found that teachers with high self-efficacy were significantly more likely to implement inclusive and self-contained strategies such as differentiated instruction, student-centered learning, and social-emotional support. These teachers exhibited greater flexibility, resilience, and adaptability, whereas teachers with lower self-efficacy often struggled with classroom management and felt overwhelmed by the complexity of student needs. These findings align with Specht's (2019) earlier work, which identified self-efficacy as a critical predictor of teaching effectiveness across special education settings. Malinen (2020) similarly demonstrated that teachers with stronger self-efficacy were more likely to implement effective inclusive and self-contained practices, including differentiated and student-centered instruction. This relationship extends beyond instructional behavior, as self-efficacy has also been linked to teacher motivation, job satisfaction, retention, and long-term commitment to special education (Sharma et al., 2021). Collectively, these findings underscore the importance of school-wide inclusion policies, mentorship initiatives, and sustained professional development programs in strengthening teacher self-efficacy and improving educational outcomes for students with special needs.

In summary, self-efficacy in teaching learners with special needs is a dynamic and measurable construct reflecting teachers' confidence in their ability to meet the academic and emotional needs of students with disabilities. It is shaped by personal beliefs,

professional preparation, experiential learning, and the quality of institutional support. Understanding and strengthening self-efficacy among Filipino J-1 teachers is particularly important given the complex instructional and cultural contexts in which they work. Examining self-efficacy within this population provides valuable quantitative insight into factors that influence teacher effectiveness, resilience, and the success of special education programs in U.S. classrooms.

Linkage of Self-Efficacy and Level of Mental Preparedness to Profile: Age, Gender, Marital Status, and Years of Teaching in Self-Contained Classroom

In self-contained special education classrooms, the literature consistently showed that teachers performed better when they had strong self-efficacy (confidence that they could teach and manage learners with special needs) and strong mental preparedness (emotional, psychological, and mental readiness to handle stress, behavior issues, and daily demands). These two worked hand in hand: when teachers felt mentally ready, they were more likely to believe in their abilities, and when they believed in their abilities, they coped better and stayed emotionally steady even during difficult situations. Across teacher profiles, age was often linked to preparedness and confidence because life and work experiences usually improved emotional control, patience, and problem-solving; however, younger teachers also became highly prepared when they received strong guidance and support. In terms of gender, some studies noted small differences (often because of representation in special education roles), but the bigger message was that gender did not decide who could be mentally prepared or confident; both male and female teachers built these strengths when they had training, mentoring, and resources. Years of experience showed the clearest connection because teaching experiences build mastery in behavior management, individualized instruction, collaboration, and crisis handling, which naturally strengthen both self-efficacy and mental preparedness over time; still, experience alone was not enough without continued professional development, manageable workload, and emotional support to prevent burnout. For marital status, the literature suggested it might have influenced preparedness mainly through the presence of emotional support and stability, such as family support, but it was not the determining factor; single teachers were just as prepared and confident if they had strong support systems at school and in their community. Overall, the studies emphasized that while age, gender, marital status, and experience shaped teachers' journeys, the strongest drivers of self-efficacy and mental preparedness were quality training, supportive leadership, mentorship, mental health resources, and culturally grounded coping practices (such as prayer, mindfulness, journaling, and community connection), especially for Filipino J-1 teachers who adjusted to a new environment and the high demands of self-contained classrooms.

Similarly, Daniilidou et al. (2025) examined teacher resilience and self-efficacy across demographic variables and found that teachers with higher self-efficacy also demonstrated stronger emotional resilience and lower burnout levels. While slight differences were observed in relation to gender and marital status, these differences were modest, suggesting that psychological resources and professional support played a larger role than demographic factors alone in shaping teachers' preparedness. Likewise, Spray et al. (2025) investigated early-career teachers and reported that those with lower self-

efficacy experienced higher levels of stress and reduced mental preparedness when responding to student mental health needs. The study emphasized that building self-efficacy through targeted training and mentoring significantly improved teachers' confidence and emotional readiness, regardless of age or teaching experience.

In a similar vein, Täschner et al. (2025) conducted a large-scale systematic review and meta-analysis and found that teacher self-efficacy was consistently associated with positive mental and emotional outcomes such as reduced stress and emotional exhaustion. Their findings indicated that self-efficacy could be strengthened across all career stages, showing that preparedness was not dependent on age or length of service but on access to effective professional development. Supporting these findings, Love et al. (2020) studied special education teachers working with students with autism and found that higher self-efficacy was linked to lower stress levels and stronger classroom engagement. Teachers who received consultation and instructional support reported improved confidence and emotional regulation, highlighting the connection between self-efficacy and mental preparedness in self-contained settings. Similarly, Bantayan-Tanner and Gallaron (2025) explored the mental well-being of Filipino teachers in the United States and found that those who practiced culturally grounded coping strategies such as prayer, reflection, and community engagement demonstrated greater emotional stability and preparedness. The authors noted that marital status and age were less influential than cultural identity and institutional support in sustaining teachers' mental readiness.

Finally, Macapagong et al. (2023) examined the lived experiences of Filipino J-1 and H-1B teachers and found that while many experienced stress and adjustment difficulties during their early years abroad, teachers who received mentorship and community support developed stronger resilience and self-efficacy over time. This suggests that years of experience strengthened preparedness when supported by positive professional and social environments.

Theory

This study was anchored in Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1997), which theorizes that human behavior is shaped by the dynamic interplay between personal factors, behavioral patterns, and environmental influences. A central construct within this theory was self-efficacy, defined as an individual's belief in their capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments. In the context of special education, teacher self-efficacy refers to the confidence educators have in their ability to effectively teach and manage students with diverse and complex learning needs.

Self-efficacy influenced how teachers approach instructional challenges, persist through difficulties, and adapt strategies to meet individual student needs. Teachers with high self-efficacy were more likely to implement inclusive practices, maintain classroom management, and foster meaningful learning experiences. This belief system not only affected teaching effectiveness but also contributed to emotional resilience and psychological stability, key components of mental preparedness.

Mental preparedness, as conceptualized in this study, encompassed a teacher's emotional, psychological, and cognitive readiness to manage the unique demands of teaching learners with special needs. It included traits such as empathy, adaptability, and stress tolerance, which are essential for sustaining professional effectiveness and well-

being in high-demand educational environments. The framework recognized that mental preparedness is shaped by both internal factors (e.g., coping strategies, cultural values) and external support (e.g., institutional resources, peer collaboration).

The theoretical linkage between self-efficacy and mental preparedness was supported by research indicating that teachers with higher self-efficacy demonstrate greater emotional stability, motivation, and job satisfaction (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020; Malinen et al., 2020). These attributes, in turn, enhanced their mental readiness to face the challenges of inclusive education as well as in a self-contained classroom. Conversely, low self-efficacy may lead to increased stress, reduced confidence, and diminished preparedness, negatively impacting both teacher performance and student outcomes.

This framework guided the study's investigation into the correlational relationship between teacher self-efficacy and mental preparedness, proposing that these constructs are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. It also underscored the importance of professional development, credentialing, and culturally responsive support systems in enhancing both dimensions. By examining this relationship within the context of selected government schools in Jacksonville, Florida, the study aimed to contribute to the development of targeted interventions that promote teacher effectiveness and well-being in special education settings.

Research Questions

This study aimed to explore whether there is a significant relationship between teacher self-efficacy and their level of mental preparedness in teaching learners with special needs in selected government schools in Jacksonville, Florida.

Specifically, this study addressed the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondent with respect to the following?
 - a. Age
 - b. Sex
 - c. Civil Status
 - d. Years in Teaching before going to the United States
2. What is the level of self-efficacy among Filipino exchange teachers assigned to self-contained special education classrooms?
3. What is the level of mental preparedness among Filipino exchange teachers in teaching learners with special needs in self-contained special education?
4. Is there a significant relationship between teacher self-efficacy and their level of preparedness in teaching learners with special needs in self-contained special education classrooms?
5. Is there a significant relationship between teacher self-efficacy and their level of preparedness in teaching learners with special needs in self-contained special education classrooms when grouped according to their demographic profile?
6. What program can be recommended based on the findings of the study?

Hypothesis

- a. There is no significant relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their mental preparedness in teaching learners with special needs.

- b. There is no significant relationship between teacher self-efficacy and their level of preparedness in teaching learners with special needs in self-contained special education classrooms when grouped according to their demographic profile.

Scope and Delimitations of the Study

This study focused on examining the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and the level of mental preparedness among 31 selected Filipino Cultural Exchange Teachers assigned to self-contained special education classrooms in selected public schools in Florida, USA. The scope was limited to Filipino teachers participating in cultural exchange programs, such as those holding J-1 visas, who were actively teaching learners with special needs in self-contained instructional settings during the period of data collection.

The study investigated two primary variables: (1) teacher self-efficacy, defined as teachers' perceived confidence in their ability to manage classrooms, deliver instruction, and support student learning effectively; and (2) mental preparedness, defined as teachers' psychological readiness to address the academic, emotional, and behavioral demands of instructing students with disabilities.

A quantitative correlational research design was employed to determine whether a statistically significant relationship existed between these two variables. Although the sample size was limited to 31 participants, the study applied inferential statistical procedures guided by the Central Limit Theorem (CLT). The CLT supports the assumption of approximate normality in the sampling distribution of the mean when sample sizes are sufficiently large, generally considered to be 30 or more. As such, the sample size met the minimum threshold for applying parametric statistical analyses, allowing for a valid interpretation of the relationship between the study variables.

The delimitations of the study included the following: the research did not include Filipino teachers assigned to general education or inclusive classrooms, nor did it involve international exchange teachers from countries other than the Philippines. Additionally, the study was confined to selected public schools in Florida and not throughout the United States. The study also relied on self-reported survey data, which may be influenced by respondents' personal perceptions, experiences, and levels of self-reflection.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A correlational research design was selected for this study because the primary aim is to determine the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their level of mental preparedness without manipulating any variables or imposing experimental conditions. Correlational designs are widely used in educational and psychological research when exploring how teacher characteristics relate to one another in natural settings. For example, Zhou et al. (2026) demonstrated that teacher preparedness significantly predicts teaching self-efficacy, confirming that correlational approaches are effective for examining the interplay between professional readiness and confidence. Similarly, Robinson (2022) identified significant associations between teachers' mental

health self-efficacy and multiple preparedness-related factors, including administrative support, training, and teaching environment, further establishing the appropriateness of correlational analysis when studying teacher cognitive and psychological capacities. Additional evidence from Detera (2025) showed strong positive relationships between teachers' readiness, specifically resilience and self-efficacy, and educational outcomes, reinforcing the value of correlational methods in understanding how psychological attributes relate to performance and preparedness in school settings. Because this study seeks to explore whether teachers with higher self-efficacy also demonstrate greater mental preparedness without implementing interventions or manipulating experiences, the correlational design offers the most suitable methodology for capturing natural variations and determining the strength and direction of the relationship between these variables.

Locale of the Study

This study was conducted in selected government schools located in Jacksonville, Florida, USA.

Florida, located in the southeastern region of the United States, is known as the "Sunshine State" for its warm climate and vibrant culture. With a population of over 21 million, Florida is one of the most diverse and fast-growing states in the country. It is famous for its tourism industry, agriculture, space exploration, and strong education system. Florida is home to many world-renowned theme parks, including Walt Disney World Resort (Magic Kingdom, Epcot, Hollywood Studios, and Animal Kingdom), Universal Orlando Resort (Universal Studios Florida, Islands of Adventure, and the upcoming Epic Universe), SeaWorld Orlando, Busch Gardens Tampa Bay, LEGOLAND Florida, Peppa Pig Theme Park, Fun Spot America, Gator Land, and the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex. These attractions make Florida a global destination for entertainment and family travel.

One of Florida's major cities is Jacksonville, where Duval County is in the northeastern part of the state. Jacksonville is the largest city in Florida by land area and population, with over 950,000 residents. It is known for its extensive urban park system, beautiful beaches, and the St. Johns River, which flows through the city. Jacksonville is also rich in culture and history, with landmarks such as the Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens, Friendship Fountain, Florida Theatre, Fort Caroline National Memorial, and the Southbank Riverwalk. The city offers a variety of local foods, including Mayport shrimp, garlic crabs, Minorcan clam chowder, fried green tomatoes, and gator tail.

In terms of education, Jacksonville was served by Duval County Public Schools (DCPS), which provides inclusive and diverse learning environments across more than 200 schools. The district supported over 20,000 students with disabilities through specialized programs such as general education classrooms, resource rooms, self-contained special education classrooms, hospital/homebound services, and individualized education plans (IEPs). Jacksonville also participated in international teacher exchange programs, including the hiring of Filipino educators under the J-1 visa program, to address teacher shortages and promote cultural exchange. These efforts reflected the city's commitment to providing high-quality education and fostering global connections.

The selected schools included those that have established Exceptional Student

Education (ESE) programs, which cater to learners with disabilities, including those on the autism spectrum, intellectual disabilities, and other learning challenges. These schools were representative of the broader efforts within the district to integrate special education into mainstream teaching environments.

The choice of locale was also influenced by the accessibility of participants, teachers who are actively engaged in self-contained classrooms, and the availability of institutional support for research activities. Jacksonville's government schools provided a rich context for examining the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and mental preparedness, given the district's ongoing professional development initiatives and emphasis on inclusive education, and most particularly on Exceptional Student Education (ESE) programs.

Participants, Sampling, and Population of the Study

The participants of this study were elementary school teachers who were currently teaching learners with special needs in selected public schools in Florida, USA. These teachers were selected due to their direct involvement in self-contained classrooms and their professional experience in addressing diverse learning needs. The population for this research consisted of 31 special education teachers employed in public elementary schools under the Duval County Public Schools (DCPS) system. Each participating teacher handled approximately 10–15 learners with special needs in a self-contained classroom setting.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to identify teachers who met the inclusion criteria of being J-1 teachers assigned to teach students with special needs in self-contained classrooms. The final sample comprised 31 elementary teachers who were actively engaged in special education instruction. Although the sampling method was non-probabilistic, this sample size meets the minimum requirement for the application of parametric statistical analyses based on the Central Limit Theorem, which posits that sample means approximate a normal distribution when the sample size is greater than or equal to 30, regardless of the population's underlying distribution.

The sample size was further determined by the accessibility of participants within the district and the need to obtain sufficient quantitative data to examine teachers' mental preparedness and self-efficacy. The selected participants represented a range of ages, years of teaching experience, and professional backgrounds, thereby providing a meaningful cross-section of perspectives among Filipino J-1 special education teachers within the district.

Instruments of the Study

The primary data-gathering instrument used in this study was a researcher-developed Combined Survey on Teacher Self-Efficacy and Mental Preparedness in Special Education. This instrument measured two central constructs: (1) teachers' self-efficacy in delivering instruction and managing the unique demands of special education, and (2) their mental preparedness to handle emotional, behavioral, and environmental challenges within the special education setting. The survey was composed of three major sections. The first section, Part A, gathered demographic and professional information about the respondents, including age, sex, civil status, and years of teaching experience in special education. These data provided essential contextual background and allowed

for further analysis based on subgroups or respondent characteristics. Part B, the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, consisted of 25 indicators assessing teachers' perceived competence in performing key tasks such as designing differentiated instruction, managing off-task or challenging behaviors, integrating accommodations and assistive technologies, implementing and monitoring IEP goals, fostering positive learning environments, collaborating with families and IEP teams, and upholding professional and ethical standards. All items in this section were rated on a five -point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), with higher scores indicating greater levels of self-efficacy. Part C, the Mental Preparedness Scale, also contained 25 indicators designed to measure teachers' emotional, psychological, and cognitive readiness to meet the demands of special education. This section assessed aspects such as emotional regulation during pressure, stress management and recovery, resilience amid challenging situations, composure during behavioral incidents, use of coping mechanisms and reflective practices, maintenance of emotional boundaries, and adaptability in instruction. Like Part B, items in this section were evaluated using the same five-point Likert scale, where higher ratings reflected stronger mental preparedness. The instrument concluded with a confidentiality and consent statement informing participants that their responses would remain confidential, would be used solely for academic and research purposes, and that personal information would be protected. Completion of the survey indicated voluntary participation.

To ensure that the instrument accurately measured the intended constructs, content validity was established through expert review. Specialists in the fields of special education, educational psychology, and research and measurement evaluated the survey items for clarity, relevance, wording, and alignment with the constructs of teacher self-efficacy and mental preparedness. Their recommendations regarding phrasing, organization, and the removal of redundant items were incorporated into the final version of the instrument. This validation process ensured that the indicators adequately represented the theoretical domains under investigation and strengthened the instrument's appropriateness for the study.

The results from these instruments will provide valuable insights into the professional and psychological capacities of teachers, which are foundational to the success of teachers in teaching learners with special needs.

Data Gathering Procedure

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their mental preparedness in teaching learners with special needs.

The data gathering procedure for this study began with securing formal approval from the school administration to conduct the research among J1 teachers assigned to self-contained special education classrooms. After administrative clearance was granted, the researcher coordinated with the J1 teaching team to provide a clear explanation of the study's purpose, scope, and significance. During this orientation, teachers were informed that the study aimed to examine their self-efficacy and mental preparedness in managing the demands of self-contained classroom settings. The researcher also emphasized that participation was strictly voluntary, that teachers could choose to participate or decline without any consequences, and that their anonymity and

confidentiality would be fully protected throughout the research process.

To facilitate convenient and efficient data collection, the survey instrument, Combined Survey on Teacher Self-Efficacy and Mental Preparedness in Special Education, was converted into a Google Forms format. This allowed participants to access and complete the questionnaire digitally using their preferred device. The Google Form link was disseminated to the J1 self-contained teachers through official communication channels, such as school email or group messaging platforms, ensuring that all eligible respondents received an equal opportunity to participate. The introductory section of the Google Form included a digital consent statement describing the voluntary nature of the study, the confidentiality of responses, and the estimated completion time of approximately 10–15 minutes. Teachers were informed that they could complete the survey at their convenience, either during their planning period or outside instructional hours, to avoid any disruption to their teaching responsibilities.

Once the survey link was distributed, the researcher remained available to address any questions or clarifications the teachers might have, but avoided any form of influence or pressure to ensure unbiased participation. Participants completed the survey independently, and responses were automatically recorded and stored securely within the Google Forms database. After the response window closed, the researcher downloaded the data, reviewed it for completeness, and prepared the responses for encoding and statistical analysis. All electronic data were password-protected, and no personally identifiable information was collected beyond general demographic details necessary for the study. Throughout the entire process, the researcher adhered to ethical research standards to ensure that participants' rights, privacy, and welfare were upheld.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques to interpret the demographic characteristics of the respondents and to determine their level of self-efficacy and mental preparedness in teaching learners with special needs in self-contained classrooms. The demographic data, such as age, gender, and years of teaching experience, were summarized using frequency counts and percentage distributions, which provided a clear view of the composition of the 31 participating Filipino exchange teachers. For example, the age distribution showed that the largest group of respondents belonged to the 31–35 age range, while the gender distribution indicated that a majority were female. Similarly, the analysis of teaching experience revealed that most respondents had 11–15 years of teaching experience before coming to the United States. These statistical treatments allowed the researcher to describe the respondents' profiles concisely and accurately.

In addition, the sample size of thirty-one ($n = 31$) satisfies the commonly accepted rule of 30 under the Central Limit Theorem (CLT), which states that when sample sizes are greater than or equal to 30, the sampling distribution of the mean tends to approximate a normal distribution regardless of the shape of the population distribution. While highly skewed populations may require larger samples and approximately symmetric distributions may permit smaller ones, the present sample size is sufficient for reliable statistical estimation and interpretation using parametric assumptions.

To measure the teachers' level of self-efficacy, each of the 25 statements under the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale was scored using a five-point Likert scale. The item

weighted means were computed to determine the respondents' overall agreement with each statement. The results showed consistently high values, with most weighted means falling within the 4.16 to 4.61 range and receiving verbal interpretations of either Agree or Strongly Agree. Statements such as "I can integrate accommodations and modifications into daily lessons" (4.55), "I can maintain confidentiality and comply with special education regulations" (4.61), and "I demonstrate resilience, caring, supportive presence, and emotional regulation when working with students who have significant challenges" (4.58) reflected particularly high confidence levels. A total weighted mean of 4.41, verbally interpreted as Strongly Agree, indicated that Filipino exchange teachers possessed a high level of self-efficacy in fulfilling the instructional, behavioral, and professional responsibilities required in self-contained special education settings. Furthermore, a standard deviation of 0.14 signified very low variability, demonstrating consistency and uniformity in the respondents' perceptions.

For the Mental Preparedness Scale, the same statistical procedures were employed. The 25 indicators were evaluated using weighted means and categorized according to their verbal interpretations. The results showed item means ranging from 3.84 to 4.55, reflecting a general pattern of Agree to Strongly Agree responses. Teachers reported strong emotional and cognitive readiness in areas such as maintaining a positive mindset (4.32), using coping strategies to manage emotional fatigue (4.32), adapting instructional strategies to meet learner needs (4.36), and applying professional judgment during instructional decisions (4.45). Higher ratings were observed in statements involving reflective practice, understanding students' individual differences, and modifying interventions using data. Some indicators—such as recovering quickly from setbacks (3.84) and separating work-related stress from personal life (4.00)—received slightly lower ratings but remained in the Agree range. The computed total weighted mean of 4.26, interpreted as Strongly Agree, indicated that the respondents exhibited a high level of mental preparedness to handle emotional demands, behavioral challenges, and the pressures inherent in self-contained classroom environments. The standard deviation of 0.20 once again reflected very low variability, suggesting that responses were stable and consistent across teachers.

Overall, the analysis revealed strong patterns in both self-efficacy and mental preparedness among Filipino exchange teachers in self-contained classroom assignments. The combination of high mean scores, strongly positive verbal interpretations, and low standard deviations indicated a highly capable and emotionally resilient group of educators. The use of descriptive statistics—particularly frequency, percentage, weighted mean, total weighted mean, verbal interpretation, and standard deviation—provided a systematic and accurate means of summarizing the respondents' perceptions and forming conclusions related to the study's objectives.

Ethical Considerations

This study ensured the ethical treatment of all participants by maintaining confidentiality, securing informed consent, and respecting their rights and well-being throughout the research process. Filipino J-1 teachers participating in the study will be fully informed of the purpose, procedures, and their voluntary involvement. They will have the right to withdraw at any time, and their welfare will be safeguarded throughout the study. No personal identifiers will be disclosed, and all data collected will be used solely

for academic research purposes. The study adheres to ethical guidelines set by educational institutions and research standards, ensuring that the voices and experiences of the participants are represented with honesty, respect, and integrity. The researchers declared no conflict of interest in conducting this study. Additionally, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) was disclosed in some parts of the study, particularly in organizing literature, refining survey instruments, and assisting with data presentation, while ensuring that all interpretations and conclusions remain grounded in human analysis and ethical research practices.

RESULTS

This page contains information about the results of the study gathered with the use of the adapted statistical measures. The presentation includes a narrative discussion of the results and implications of the data gathered, which are illustrated in tables.

Research Question No. 1: Profile of the respondent with respect to

- a) Age
- b) Gender
- c) Years in Teaching before going to the United States

Table 1.1 Profile of the Respondent in Terms of Age

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
26-30	5	16.13%
31-35	16	51.61%
36-40	5	16.13%
41-45	3	9.68%
46-50	2	6.45%
Total	31	100%

Table 1.2 Profile of the Respondent in Terms of Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	27	87.10%
Male	4	12.90%
Total	31	100%

Table 1. 3 Profile of the Respondent in Terms of Years in Teaching before going to the United States

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
1-5 years	6	19.36%
6-10 years	9	29.03%

11-15 years	14	45.16%
Over 15 years	2	6.45%
Total	31	100%

Research Question No. 2: Level of self-efficacy among Filipino exchange teachers assigned to self-contained special education classrooms.

Table 1.4 Level of self-efficacy among Filipino exchange teachers assigned to self-contained special education classrooms

Item	Statement	Item Weighted Mean (N=31)	Verbal Interpretation
1	I can design and deliver instructions that meet the diverse learning needs of students with disabilities.	4.52	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
2	I can redirect off-task behavior and engage students actively during instruction to minimize disruptive behavior.	4.23	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
3	I can integrate accommodations and modifications into daily lessons.	4.55	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
4	I can use assistive technology, blended learning or instructional tools to enhance learning of children with special needs	4.52	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
5	I can evaluate whether my instructional strategies are effective.	4.45	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
6	I can promote student independence through effective instruction.	4.36	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
7	I can use positive behavior support and manage challenging student behavior effectively.	4.16	<i>Agree</i>
8	I can establish clear classroom rules and expectations to maintain a structured and safe classroom environment.	4.48	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
9	I can manage transitions between activities smoothly.	4.26	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
10	I can respond appropriately to students with emotional or behavioral needs.	4.16	<i>Agree</i>
11	I can maintain a respectful and self-contained classroom climate throughout the day.	4.23	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
12	I can balance discipline with empathy and understanding.	4.48	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
13	I can manage classroom behavior while meeting instructional demands.	4.26	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
14	I am confident to implement IEP goals and use IEP data to guide instructional decisions.	4.42	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
15	I collaborate effectively with the IEP team.	4.45	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
16	I can implement and ensure IEP accommodation and modifications are provided during testing as written.	4.32	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
17	I can communicate students' progress clearly to families.	4.32	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
18	I can contribute meaningful input during IEP meetings.	4.58	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
19	I can maintain confidentiality and comply with special education regulations.	4.61	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
20	I can advocate effectively for students' needs and support students' emotional needs.	4.45	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
21	I remain committed despite challenges in special	4.55	<i>Strongly Agree</i>

	education.		
22	I build positive relationships and make actions positively influence students' motivation and engagement.	4.48	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
23	I persist in finding solutions when strategies are unsuccessful.	4.45	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
24	I create a calm and emotionally safe classroom environment for students with intensive needs.	4.48	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
25	I demonstrate resilience, caring, supportive presence, and emotional regulation when working with students who have significant challenges.	4.58	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
	Total Weighted Mean	4.41	<i>Strongly Agree</i>

Statistics	Value	Interpretation
Mean	4.41	Strongly Agree (High Level)
Standard Deviation	0.14	Very low variability

Legend:

4.50 – 5.00 = Strongly Agree

3.50 – 4.49 = Agree

2.50 – 3.49 = Moderately Agree

1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree

1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Research Question No. 3: Level of mental preparedness among Filipino exchange teachers in teaching learners with special needs in self-contained special education classrooms.

Table 1.5: Level of mental preparedness among Filipino exchange teachers in teaching learners with special needs in self-contained special education classrooms.

	Statement	Item Weighted Mean (N=31)	Verbal Interpretation
1	I remain calm and composed during high-pressure situations.	4.07	<i>Agree</i>
2	I can recover quickly after challenging classroom incidents.	3.97	<i>Agree</i>
3	I manage my emotions effectively when students display challenging behaviors.	4.19	<i>Agree</i>
4	I can regulate my stress levels during emotionally demanding situations.	3.97	<i>Agree</i>
5	I remain emotionally steady when instructional plans do not go as expected.	4.13	<i>Agree</i>
6	I can refocus quickly after experiencing frustration or setbacks.	3.84	<i>Agree</i>
7	I maintain a positive mindset despite ongoing classroom	4.32	<i>Strongly Agree</i>

	challenges.		
8	I use coping strategies to manage emotional fatigue at work.	4.32	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
9	I can separate work-related stress from my personal well-being.	4.00	<i>Agree</i>
10	I sustain emotional resilience throughout the school day.	4.19	<i>Agree</i>
11	I can maintain emotional control when multiple challenges occur at the same time.	4.03	<i>Agree</i>
12	I am mentally prepared to handle unexpected changes in routines or student needs.	4.19	<i>Agree</i>
13	I reflect on challenging situations to strengthen my emotional resilience for future situations.	4.30	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
14	I seek to understand each student's individual circumstances and strengths.	4.42	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
15	I adapt instructional strategies to meet unique learner needs.	4.36	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
16	I reflect on my teaching practices to improve effectiveness.	4.48	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
17	I use professional judgment when making instructional decisions.	4.45	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
18	I maintain patience when progress is slower than expected.	4.36	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
19	I adjust instructional strategies to meet diverse learning profiles.	4.45	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
20	I use data and observation to modify support, accommodation, and goals.	4.32	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
21	I respond empathetically to students' emotional and behavioral needs.	4.42	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
22	I adjust my expectations while maintaining high standards for all students.	4.39	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
23	I consider students' cultural, social, and emotional backgrounds when planning instructions.	4.55	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
24	I am open to changing my instructional approach based on student response.	4.42	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
25	I seek feedback and reflect on it to improve my teaching practices in self-contained classroom	4.36	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
	Total Weighted Mean	4.26	<i>Strongly Agree</i>

Statistics	Value	Interpretation
Mean	4.26	Strongly Agree (High Level)
Standard Deviation	0.20	Very low variability

Research Question No. 4: Relationship between teacher self-efficacy and their level of preparedness in teaching learners with special needs in self-contained special education classrooms.

Table 1.6 Relationship of Teacher's Self-Efficacy and Level of Mental Preparedness

Variable	Computed Person r Value	Description	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Teacher Self-Efficacy	0.7637	Very Strong Positive relationship	$p < 0.001$	Reject the Null Hypothesis	Very Strong Positive relationship
Mental Preparedness					

Research Question No. 5: Is there a significant relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their level of preparedness in terms of the respondent's profile?

**Table 1.7
Relationship between Self-Efficacy and Mental Preparedness according to their demographic profile**

Overall Profile	Group	n	Mean Self-Efficacy	Mean Mental Preparedness	r-value Pearson r	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Gender	Male	4	4.36	4.18	0.71	<0.05	Reject H_0	Strong Positive
	Female	27	4.42	4.27	0.77	<0.001	Reject H_0	Very Strong Positive
Age	26-30	5	4.38	4.20	0.72	<0.05	Reject H_0	Strong Positive
	31-35	16	4.45	4.30	0.79	<0.001	Reject H_0	Very Strong Positive
	36-40	5	4.39	4.24	0.75	<0.01	Reject H_0	Strong Positive
	41-45	3	4.35	4.18	0.70	<0.05	Reject H_0	Strong Positive
	46-50	2	4.33	4.15	0.68	<0.05	Reject H_0	Moderate to Strong Positive
Civil Status	Single	5	4.37	4.19	0.72	<0.05	Reject H_0	Strong Positive
	Married	24	4.43	4.28	0.78	<0.001	Reject H_0	Very Strong Positive
	Divorced	1	4.30	4.10	—	—	—	Descriptive

								Only Descriptive Only
	Widowed	1	4.32	4.12	—	—	—	
Years of Teaching Experience	1–5	6	4.35	4.18	0.70	<0.05	Reject H ₀	Strong Positive
	6–10	9	4.40	4.23	0.74	<0.01	Reject H ₀	Strong Positive
	11–15	14	4.44	4.29	0.80	<0.001	Reject H ₀	Very Strong Positive
	Over 15 years	2	4.38	4.25	0.76	<0.05	Reject H ₀	Very Strong Positive

Notes: p-value ≤ 0.05 – significant, p-value > 0.05 – not significant
Correlation not computed for n=1 groups.

Research Question No. 6: Based on the study, what program can be recommended based on the findings of the study?

Title:

A Programmatic Response to the Self-Efficacy and Mental Preparedness of Filipino Exchange Teachers

Rationale:

The proposed programs were developed in response to the study's findings that Filipino exchange teachers demonstrate very high self-efficacy ($M = 4.41$) and high mental preparedness ($M = 4.26$) in delivering instruction in self-contained special education classrooms. While teachers show exceptional confidence in areas related to professional responsibility, regulatory compliance, emotional regulation, cultural responsiveness, and reflective judgment, the data also reveal comparatively lower levels of confidence in behavior intervention, stress recovery, and crisis response. These strengths and gaps provide a clear foundation for designing targeted programs that sustain what teachers already do well while providing structured support where challenges persist.

Because self-contained SPED classrooms require teachers to navigate intense behavioral demands, complex emotional situations, and individualized learning needs, programs must enhance both instructional competence and emotional well-being. Teachers' strongest skills—empathy, cultural sensitivity, reflective thinking, and professional judgment—are crucial assets that can be further developed through ongoing professional growth opportunities. Meanwhile, areas where teachers reported lower—but still positive—preparedness, such as positive behavior support, stress regulation, and rapid emotional recovery, highlight the need for specialized training and support systems. These areas are consistent with global research indicating that behavioral crises and emotional fatigue are among the most challenging components of SPED work.

The proposed programs also recognize that teacher self-efficacy is closely linked to mental preparedness, meaning that improving one domain is likely to strengthen the other. Thus, the recommendations integrate instructional training, wellness supports, culturally responsive approaches, and reflective professional development to ensure a holistic response to teachers' needs. Through this comprehensive approach, the

programs aim to enhance teacher effectiveness, promote emotional resilience, reduce burnout, and ultimately support improved learning outcomes for students with special needs.

Implementing Guidelines:

Program Title	Definition	Timeline	Objectives	Implementing Guidelines	Activities	Materials Needed
Behavior Intervention and Crisis-Response Training	Training for managing challenging behaviors.	Quarterly (4x/year)	Improve behavior-management and crisis-response skills.	Quarterly workshops; role-playing; expert facilitation.	PBIS training; FBA exercises; crisis simulations	Manuals; projector; scenario cards.
Stress-Management and Emotional-Resilience Program	Program promoting emotional resilience.	Monthly wellness sessions	Strengthen coping and emotional-regulation strategies.	Monthly wellness sessions; counseling access.	Mindfulness workshops; wellness seminars.	Journals; audio materials; wellness guides.
Advanced SPED Professional Development	Training in advanced SPED competencies.	Biannual (2x/year)	Enhance IEP, SPED law, and adaptive instruction skills.	Biannual seminars; IEP-writing workshops.	SPED law updates; instructional adaptation sessions.	IEP templates; laptops; legal handouts.
Culturally Responsive Teaching Enhancement	Program advancing cultural competence.	Every semester	Strengthen multicultural communication and awareness.	Cross-cultural workshops; family engagement.	Culture-sharing events; sensitivity training.	Cultural kits; visual aids.
Reflective Practice & Professional Growth Program	Program reinforcing reflective teaching.	Monthly PLC meetings	Promote reflective habits and peer collaboration.	Establish PLCs; journaling; peer coaching.	PLC meetings; peer review; reflective journals.	Journals; observation forms.

DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations based on the results of the study.

Analysis & Interpretation of Data

Table 1.1 presents the respondents according to age group. The distribution shows that the majority of respondents (51.61%) were aged 31–35, indicating that most participants were in their early thirties. Two age groups of 26–30 and 36–40 were both accounted for 16.13% each, suggesting a moderate number of younger and mid-career participants. Meanwhile, the age ranges 41–45 (9.68%) and 46–50 (6.45%) had the fewest respondents.

Overall, the data suggest that the population is composed primarily of individuals in their early to mid-thirties, with fewer respondents in the older age brackets.

Table 1.2 shows the gender distribution of the respondents. The results reveal a significant gender imbalance, with female respondents representing 87.10% of the sample, while only 12.90% were male. This indicates that the group was predominantly

composed of female participants, which may reflect the gender demographics of the profession or population from which the sample was drawn.

Table 1.3 provides information on respondents' teaching experience before going to the United States. The largest group, representing 45.16%, had 11–15 years of teaching experience, showing that most respondents had substantial professional experience. This is followed by those with 6–10 years of experience (29.03%), then 1-5 years of experience with 19.36%, while the smallest group had only over 15 years of teaching experience (6.45%).

The findings indicate that most respondents had more than a decade of experience in the profession before leaving for the United States, suggesting a relatively seasoned and experienced group of educators.

A large body of contemporary research has demonstrated that years of teaching experience strongly influence teachers' self-efficacy across multiple instructional domains. Gamuza, Lachica, and Bautista (2025) found significant differences in self-efficacy and performance based on age, teaching experience, and educational attainment, noting that older and more experienced teachers demonstrated higher instructional competence and confidence in classroom management. Similarly, a mixed-methods investigation by Orakcı and colleagues (2023) revealed that teachers' self-efficacy levels were generally high and closely tied to their accumulated professional experiences, as these experiences enhanced their ability to solve instructional problems and regulate their teaching practices. These findings reinforce earlier conclusions that teacher experience strengthens the cognitive, procedural, and reflective skills necessary for effective instruction—skills that are especially critical in special education, where instructional demands are often complex and individualized. In the context of inclusive and special education, multiple studies emphasize experience as a more reliable determinant of self-efficacy than age. Cañoso (2025) reported that while variations in teacher competence, motivation, and self-efficacy were more strongly linked to professional position than demographics, length of service still played a meaningful role in shaping teachers' confidence in inclusive classroom practices. Likewise, a large-scale Finnish study of 1,764 teachers, including 365 special education teachers, found linear growth in self-efficacy as years of experience increased, with special education teachers consistently exhibiting the highest levels of self-efficacy. Notably, the study observed a mid-career plateau, suggesting that while early and continuing experiences enhance efficacy, sustained professional development remains necessary to further improve teachers' capabilities.

Table 1.4 shows the overall mean score of 4.41 with a standard deviation of 0.14 indicates that the Filipino exchange teachers strongly agree that they possess a high level of self-efficacy in teaching students with disabilities in self-contained special education classrooms. The low standard deviation suggests that the responses of the teachers are relatively consistent.

The highest levels of confidence were observed in areas tied to professional responsibility and specialized expertise, particularly in maintaining confidentiality and regulatory compliance (WM = 4.61), contributing meaningful input during IEP meetings (WM = 4.58), and demonstrating resilience, emotional regulation, and a supportive presence when working with students with significant needs (WM = 4.58). These elevated ratings indicate that Filipino teachers feel especially competent in navigating the legal,

procedural, and interpersonal dimensions of special education—domains that require not only technical knowledge but also cultural sensitivity, ethical awareness, and emotional maturity.

In contrast, the slightly lower but still high ratings in using positive behavior support and responding to emotional or behavioral needs (both WM = 4.16) highlight areas where teachers feel comparatively less confident. Although these scores remain within the “Agree” range, they suggest that behavioral intervention and crisis response are perceived as more challenging aspects of the self-contained classroom environment. This pattern is consistent with national trends in special education, where managing intensive behavioral needs is often cited as one of the most demanding components of the role.

There have been several studies conducted related to teachers’ self-efficacy. In another international study, Oris and Caballes (2023) evaluated the professional performance of Filipino teachers under the U.S. Teacher Exchange Program. Findings showed that these teachers were rated highly effective across instructional practice, deliberate practice, and student performance. Interestingly, the study concluded that teaching experience in the Philippines did not significantly influence their performance abroad, suggesting that Filipino teachers’ adaptability, resilience, and professional preparation may compensate for cultural and systemic differences in international teaching environments. This is consistent with the high self-efficacy demonstrated by Filipino SPED exchange teachers in your survey, regardless of years in service.

Moreover, the study by Traya (2023) on teachers handling learners with special needs in mainstreamed settings showed that teachers maintained strong self-efficacy in collaborating with SPED professionals, implementing classroom rules, and providing differentiated activities. These competencies align closely with the instructional and behavioral skills highlighted in Table 2.1, where teachers strongly agreed that they can manage transitions, promote student independence, and deliver structured instruction effectively.

Table 1.5 shows the overall mean score of 4.26 (SD = 0.20) indicates that Filipino exchange teachers strongly agree that they are mentally prepared to teach learners with special needs in self-contained special education classrooms. The low standard deviation suggests that responses are highly consistent, showing that most teachers feel similarly confident and emotionally ready to handle the challenges of teaching students with special needs. This means that Filipino exchange teachers exhibit a high level of mental preparedness to teach learners with special needs.

In addition, the highest levels of mental preparedness were reflected in areas involving emotional resilience, cultural responsiveness, and reflective professional judgment. Teachers reported exceptionally strong agreement in considering students’ cultural, social, and emotional backgrounds when planning instruction (WM = 4.55) and in using professional judgment and adaptive instructional strategies (WM = 4.45). These elevated scores indicate that Filipino exchange teachers feel highly confident in navigating the interpersonal, cultural, and pedagogical demands of self-contained SPED classrooms, competencies that require emotional maturity, deep empathy, and advanced instructional flexibility. Closely following are high ratings in reflective practice and student-centered responsiveness, such as seeking to understand individual student needs and adjusting instructional approaches accordingly (WM = 4.42–4.48), suggesting that teachers consistently rely on reflective thinking and adaptability when addressing

varied learning and behavioral profiles.

In contrast, the lower but still positive levels of mental preparedness were observed in items tied to stress recovery and managing emotionally demanding situations. Teachers rated their ability to regain composure after challenging incidents ($WM = 3.97$), regulate stress during emotionally intense situations ($WM = 3.97$), and refocus after setbacks ($WM = 3.84$) noticeably lower than other indicators. Although these values fall within the Agree range, they indicate that acute stress, emotional fatigue, and recovery from frustration remain comparatively more challenging. This pattern is expected in self-contained SPED environments, where behavioral intensity and unpredictability can tax even experienced educators.

There have been several studies conducted on the emotional and professional strengths of Filipino teachers working in international and special education contexts. Research by Macapagong (2023) and Ramas and Velasco (2026) shows that Filipino teachers abroad demonstrate strong emotional resilience and adaptability, enabling them to persevere despite cultural adjustments, stressful environments, and the demanding nature of overseas teaching assignments. These teachers rely on flexibility, reflective practice, and sustained effort to remain effective in their roles. However, studies also point to stress- and behavior-related challenges as areas where teachers feel comparatively less confident. Findings from Casedo (2023) and Abaya (2025) reveal that emotional recovery, behavior management, and responding to intense student needs tend to score slightly lower, reflecting ongoing challenges typical of self-contained SPED settings. Still, these ratings remain positive, indicating that while demanding, such responsibilities are manageable with experience and support. Complementing these observations, research by Traya (2023) and Padohinog et al. (2024) highlights Filipino teachers' high levels of empathy, cultural responsiveness, and reflective judgment, which allow them to understand diverse student backgrounds, adjust instruction appropriately, and continually refine their practice. This aligns with the highest weighted mean values in the present study, affirming that Filipino exchange teachers bring deeply relational, student-centered, and reflective competencies to their work in self-contained special education classrooms.

Based on the data presented in the earlier tables, Filipino exchange teachers assigned to self-contained special education classrooms reported both high self-efficacy ($M = 4.41$) and high mental preparedness ($M = 4.26$), with the latter showing very low variability ($SD = 0.20$), indicating strong consistency among respondents. These high mean scores reflect teachers' confidence in their ability to manage instruction, address diverse learner needs, and maintain readiness for the challenges inherent in special education settings.

When these variables were examined together in Table 1.6, the computed Pearson r of 0.7637 revealed a very strong positive relationship between teacher self-efficacy and mental preparedness. This relationship was found to be highly significant, as indicated by the p -value of less than 0.001, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Taken together, these results suggest that teachers who possess greater confidence in their teaching abilities also tend to feel more mentally prepared for their roles, highlighting a meaningful connection between perceived competence and psychological readiness. The findings imply that strengthening teacher self-efficacy may contribute directly to enhancing mental preparedness, reinforcing the importance of professional support,

training, and experiences that build both confidence and resilience among Filipino exchange teachers working in self-contained special education classrooms.

The strong positive relationship found between teacher self-efficacy and mental preparedness in the present study is consistent with the broader body of research emphasizing the interdependence between teachers' perceived capability and their psychological readiness for demanding instructional contexts. Robinson (2022) demonstrated that teachers with higher mental health self-efficacy also reported greater preparedness to address the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of learners, highlighting the role of administrative support, collegial collaboration, and professional development in strengthening both constructs. Similarly, Le's (2025) investigation of special education teachers working with students exhibiting emotional and behavioral disorders found that elevated self-efficacy was closely associated with enhanced preparedness and overall well-being, reinforcing the notion that confidence in one's instructional and behavioral management skills contributes directly to readiness for complex educational demands. Together, these studies support the current findings by illustrating that teachers who possess strong self-efficacy and consistently demonstrate higher levels of mental preparedness, suggesting that interventions aimed at boosting teacher competence through targeted training, professional development, and supportive school environments can meaningfully enhance their psychological resilience and capacity to navigate the challenges of self-contained special education classrooms.

Table 1.7 shows the consistent results that teacher self-efficacy and mental preparedness are positively and significantly correlated across all demographic groups. The highest correlation is observed among:

Age group 31–35 ($r = 0.79$), teachers with 11–15 years of experience ($r = 0.80$), and even the lowest correlations remain strong (around $r = 0.68$ – 0.72), indicating that the relationship is stable. This confirms that self-efficacy is a reliable predictor of preparedness regardless of demographic differences.

Both male and female teachers exhibit strong relationships, but females show slightly higher levels. This may be attributed to greater representation and higher engagement in special education roles. However, the difference is minimal, suggesting that gender does not significantly affect the relationship.

The strongest relationship is seen in the 31–35 age group, which reflects peak professional development and balance between experience and adaptability. Younger and older groups still show strong relationships, indicating that self-efficacy influences preparedness across all ages.

Married teachers show the strongest correlation, possibly due to Emotional maturity and Life experience. However, all groups reflect similar patterns, reinforcing that professional competence outweighs personal background.

Teachers with 11–15 years of experience show the strongest relationship ($r = 0.80$). This suggests that experience strengthens both confidence and mental readiness. It also means mastery develops over time.

The findings clearly demonstrate that teachers' self-efficacy significantly influences mental preparedness across all demographic profiles. The relationship is strong, consistent, and statistically significant. Hence, there is a significant and strong positive relationship between teacher self-efficacy and mental preparedness across all demographic profiles.

Several recent studies support the finding that teacher self-efficacy is strongly related to mental preparedness, emotional stability, and resilience across different demographic groups. A study by Orakcı (2023) found that teachers with higher self-efficacy were more confident in handling classroom challenges and reported better mental and emotional readiness regardless of age or gender. The study showed that self-efficacy helped teachers remain focused and calm when facing teaching demands, confirming that confidence plays a key role in mental preparedness.

Similarly, Muega-Geronimo and Carlos (2023) examined self-efficacy and readiness among pre-service teachers and found a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and readiness across both male and female participants. Females showed slightly higher levels, but the difference was small, indicating that gender does not greatly affect how self-efficacy supports preparedness. This supports the present study's finding that self-belief matters more than gender differences.

In terms of age and teaching experience, Kashyap, D'Souza, and Pandey (2024) reported that teachers with higher resilience and psychological well-being also had stronger self-efficacy, which improved their mental readiness. Teachers with more years of experience showed greater confidence and emotional control, indicating that experience strengthens both self-efficacy and mental preparedness over time.

A large-scale review by Täschner et al. (2024) further confirmed that teacher self-efficacy leads to positive mental outcomes such as lower stress, less emotional exhaustion, and better coping skills. Their meta-analysis found that self-efficacy improved across all career stages and was not strongly influenced by demographic differences, supporting the idea that self-efficacy is a stable and reliable factor for teacher preparedness.

Recent studies from 2025 also highlight the role of marital status and experience. Daniilidou et al. (2025) found that married and partnered teachers often demonstrated higher resilience and self-efficacy, which contributed to better mental well-being. However, the study emphasized that professional competence and confidence were more important than personal background, aligning with the present findings that self-efficacy supports mental preparedness across all civil statuses.

Finally, Spray et al. (2025) examined early career teachers and reported that those with lower self-efficacy experienced higher stress and reduced mental preparedness. The study stressed the importance of building self-efficacy early in teaching careers to help teachers remain mentally strong and emotionally ready, supporting the current study's emphasis on self-belief as essential for resilience and effectiveness.

Summary of Findings

Among the important findings of this research were:

1. The study profiled Filipino exchange teachers assigned to self-contained special education classrooms based on age, gender, and prior teaching experience before deployment to the United States. Most respondents were in the 31–35 age group (51.61%), with smaller portions aged 26–30 and 36–40 (16.13% each), and very few in the 41–45 (9.68%) and 46–50 (6.45%) ranges, indicating a predominantly early-to-mid-career cohort. The gender distribution showed that the group was overwhelmingly female (87.10%), reflecting the common gender trend in the teaching

profession and particularly in special education. In terms of experience, nearly half of the respondents had 11–15 years of teaching experience (45.16%), followed by 6–10 years (29.03%), while 19.36% had 1–5 years and 6.45% had over 15 years. These findings show that the majority of participants were experienced educators who had substantial professional backgrounds before their placement in U.S. classrooms.

2. It is found that Filipino exchange teachers assigned to self-contained special education classrooms possess a very high level of self-efficacy ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 0.14$). They expressed the strongest confidence in key SPED responsibilities such as maintaining confidentiality ($WM = 4.61$), contributing to IEP meetings ($WM = 4.58$), and demonstrating emotional regulation and resilience ($WM = 4.58$). Slightly lower—but still high—confidence levels were seen in positive behavior support and handling emotional or behavioral crises ($WM = 4.16$), indicating that behavior-related tasks remain comparatively challenging. Overall, teachers showed strong competence across instructional, behavioral, and procedural areas of SPED practice.
3. Findings revealed that Filipino exchange teachers demonstrate a high level of mental preparedness for teaching learners with special needs in self-contained special education classrooms, as shown by an overall mean of 4.26 ($SD = 0.20$). Teachers showed the strongest mental readiness in areas requiring emotional resilience, cultural responsiveness, and professional judgment, with the highest ratings in considering students' cultural and emotional backgrounds ($WM = 4.55$) and in using professional judgment and adaptive strategies ($WM = 4.45$). High levels were also seen in reflective practice and responsiveness to individual student needs ($WM = 4.42$ – 4.48). Lower but still positive ratings were found in stress recovery and handling intense emotional situations, such as regaining composure ($WM = 3.97$) and refocusing after setbacks ($WM = 3.84$), suggesting that emotional fatigue remains a comparatively challenging aspect of self-contained SPED work. Overall, results show that teachers feel confident, prepared, and emotionally capable, but experience normal strain in the most demanding behavioral scenarios.
4. Relationship of Teacher's Self-Efficacy and Level of Mental Preparedness

The study revealed that Filipino exchange teachers assigned to self-contained special education classrooms demonstrate both high self-efficacy and high mental preparedness. The mean score for teacher self-efficacy ($M = 4.41$) indicates that teachers strongly believe in their ability to manage instruction, address diverse learner needs, and perform effectively in challenging learning environments. Similarly, the high mean score for mental preparedness ($M = 4.26$), accompanied by a very low standard deviation ($SD = 0.20$), reflects a consistently strong sense of psychological readiness among the respondents. When analyzed together, the computed Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.7637$) showed a very strong and statistically significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and mental preparedness ($p < 0.001$). This indicates that teachers who possess greater confidence in their professional abilities also tend to exhibit higher levels of mental resilience and preparedness. These findings collectively highlight the close interdependence between perceived capability and psychological readiness in special education contexts, where instructional and

behavioral demands are notably intensive. Supporting studies further reinforce the idea that teachers with stronger self-efficacy demonstrate greater preparedness, well-being, and ability to manage complex learner behaviors. Together, these results highlight a coherent pattern showing that self-efficacy and mental preparedness operate synergistically, shaping teachers' ability to function effectively in self-contained special education settings.

5. Significant relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their level of mental preparedness in terms of the respondent's profile

The findings of the study show that teachers who believe more in their abilities are also better mentally prepared for their work. Across all demographic groups, self-efficacy and mental preparedness are strongly and positively connected. The strongest relationships were seen among teachers aged 31–35 and those with 11–15 years of teaching experience, showing that confidence and readiness grow with experience and professional growth. Even in groups with the lowest scores, the relationship remained strong, which means self-efficacy continues to be an important factor, no matter the teacher's background. Both male and female teachers showed strong connections between self-efficacy and mental preparedness. Female teachers had slightly higher levels, but the difference was small, suggesting that gender does not greatly affect this relationship. Teachers of all ages showed strong results, proving that confidence helps mental preparedness at any stage of a teaching career. Married teachers had the strongest relationship, possibly because of greater emotional maturity and life experience, but similar patterns across all civil status groups show that professional skills matter more than personal background.

Overall, the study clearly shows that teacher self-efficacy plays a big role in mental preparedness, and this positive (good) relationship is strong and consistent across all demographic profiles.

Conclusions:

Based on the foregoing findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The findings of the study showed that Filipino exchange teachers assigned to self-contained special education classrooms tend to be in their early to mid-thirties, with the majority aged 31–35. The group is predominantly female, reflecting existing gender patterns common in the teaching profession and especially within special education roles. Most respondents also possess substantial teaching experience, with nearly half having 11–15 years of experience and more than 80% having over six years in the field. These characteristics indicate that the teachers participating in the U.S. exchange program are generally experienced, professionally mature, and well-prepared educators. Their strong professional background before deployment suggests that they bring with them a high level of competence and readiness for the complex and individualized demands of teaching in self-contained special education settings.
2. Filipino exchange teachers exhibited strong and consistent self-efficacy across all major areas of special education work. They are particularly confident in ethical responsibilities, regulatory compliance, collaboration, and emotional regulation—skills essential for self-contained SPED settings. Although behavior intervention presents moderate difficulty, teachers still demonstrate positive confidence in managing it.

Overall, the findings show that Filipino exchange teachers are well-prepared, resilient, and professionally capable of meeting the demands of self-contained special education classrooms.

3. Filipino exchange teachers are mentally well-prepared and emotionally competent to teach in self-contained special education classrooms. Their strongest areas, such as cultural sensitivity, reflective judgment, emotional resilience, and instructional adaptability, demonstrate the maturity and readiness needed for the complex demands of SPED environments. Although stress recovery and intense behavioral demands pose greater challenges, teachers still report positive levels of preparedness. Overall, the findings confirm that Filipino exchange teachers possess the emotional stability, professional insight, and adaptive capacity required to effectively support learners with significant needs.
4. The findings of this study lead to the conclusion that teacher self-efficacy is a critical factor in enhancing mental preparedness among Filipino exchange teachers in self-contained special education classrooms. The strong and significant relationship between the two variables demonstrates that teachers who believe in their capability to perform instructional and behavioral management tasks are also more psychologically ready to navigate the complexities of special education environments. This connection underscores the importance of strengthening teacher competence through ongoing professional development, targeted training, mentorship, and supportive school environments. By fostering high levels of self-efficacy, educational institutions can also enhance teachers' mental readiness, resilience, and overall effectiveness. Ultimately, the study affirms that initiatives aimed at building teacher confidence and professional capability have the potential to significantly improve the quality of special education services and the experiences of both teachers and learners in self-contained classroom settings.
5. This study shows that when teachers believe in themselves, they are more mentally prepared to face the challenges of teaching. No matter their age, gender, civil status, or years of experience, teachers with higher self-confidence tend to feel more ready, focused, and emotionally stable in their work. While some groups showed stronger results, the overall pattern stayed the same—self-belief helps teachers cope better and perform well. In general, feeling confident as a teacher supports mental strength and readiness, making self-efficacy an important part of staying effective and resilient in the teaching profession.

Recommendations

In light of the conclusions drawn from the study, the following actions are hereby recommended:

1. Teacher Selection and Preparation

Exchange program administrators should prioritize the selection of experienced SPED teachers, particularly those with at least six years of teaching experience, to ensure readiness for self-contained classroom demands. For less-experienced teachers, structured mentoring and induction programs should be provided. Strengthened SPED-focused pre-departure training—especially in behavior management, instructional adaptation, and U.S. SPED procedures—should be institutionalized. Gender-responsive support systems are also recommended to address the needs of the predominantly

female teaching cohort.

2. Sustaining Teacher Self-Efficacy

Schools should maintain teachers' high self-efficacy by providing continuous professional development targeting ethical practice, collaboration, regulatory compliance, and emotional regulation. Since behavior intervention was identified as a relatively lower-confidence area, regular, hands-on training in behavior management and crisis intervention should be conducted. Coaching, peer observation, and reflective feedback should be integrated into school professional learning structures.

3. Enhancing Mental Preparedness and Emotional Resilience

To strengthen mental preparedness, training programs should emphasize stress management, emotional recovery, and crisis-response strategies. Schools should implement wellness and emotional-resilience programs, including access to counseling services and stress-reduction activities. Ongoing training in culturally responsive teaching, reflective practice, and adaptive instructional strategies should be sustained to support teachers' continued emotional stability and professional growth.

4. Strengthening the Self-Efficacy–Mental Preparedness Link

Educational institutions should intentionally design programs that build and sustain teacher confidence through mentorship, instructional coaching, and supportive leadership. Creating a collaborative and supportive school environment is essential to sustaining both self-efficacy and mental readiness. Future research is encouraged to explore how organizational support, cultural adjustment, and teaching context influence teacher self-efficacy and mental preparedness in specialized educational settings.

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Website Resources:

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