

**The relationship between teacher soft skills and student
behavior management in inclusive classrooms**

Irene A. Sarda

Cebu Technological University - Main Campus
Cebu City, Philippines
Email: sardzirene@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the relationship between teacher soft skills and student behavior management in inclusive classrooms at Hilario P. Davide Sr. National High School during the 2025–2026 school year and served as the basis for a proposed Action Plan. It examined teacher demographics as well as the extent to which teachers perceived and demonstrated soft skills such as communication, empathy, patience, and adaptability in managing student behavior. Classroom management practices assessed included enforcing rules, applying positive reinforcement, intervening early, and collaborating with colleagues and parents. Data were collected using structured survey questionnaires and analyzed through descriptive statistics to summarize respondents' profiles and perceptions. Pearson's correlation coefficient determined the relationship between perceived soft skills and demonstrated behavior management. Findings indicated that teachers generally rated themselves as competent in soft skills and reported consistent classroom management practices. Most respondents were relatively young, predominantly female, and early- to mid-career, with higher education degrees common among the group. Strengths were observed in communication, empathy, resilience, and maintaining positive relationships, while collaboration and confidence in handling students with special educational needs were slightly lower. Correlation analysis revealed a negligible positive relationship between perceived soft skills and demonstrated management. These results highlight the need to align teacher perceptions with practical strategies. It is recommended that Action Plan aims to strengthen teacher competencies, improve behavior management practices, and foster inclusive learning environments.

Keywords: Soft skills and student behavior management in inclusive classrooms, academic demands, behavioral management, teachers perceived competence, action plan, Argao, Cebu

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INTRODUCTION

Managing classroom behavior while addressing the diverse needs of learners remains one of the most pressing challenges in inclusive education. Beyond instructional expertise, teacher soft skills such as communication, empathy, patience, and adaptability are increasingly recognized as essential in creating stable, supportive, and effective learning environments. This study focused on how teacher soft skills influenced behavior management in inclusive classrooms at Hilario P. Davide Sr. National High School. Although inclusive education policies have been widely promoted, the systematic integration of soft skills into teachers' daily practices has received less attention, even though these skills directly affect student learning, teacher effectiveness, and the overall success of inclusive programs.

International research supports the role of soft skills in inclusive education. Kanak (2024) emphasized that students' soft skills contributed to successful inclusion in Italian schools, reinforcing the importance of teachers modeling the same qualities. Mastam and Zaharudin (2024) found that developing soft skills enhanced the participation and academic performance of students with disabilities. Fernandes et al. (2021) highlighted that teachers with strong interpersonal abilities were better able to maintain positive interactions and address behavioral challenges effectively. Mitsea et al. (2021) argued that combining soft skills with metacognitive strategies amplified the effectiveness of inclusive practices, underscoring the importance of managing both cognitive and emotional classroom demands.

Local studies mirror these findings while addressing contextual challenges. Sanchez (2023) reported that teachers' communication, consistency, and emotional control significantly influenced learners with special educational needs. Callorina et al. (2024) found that teacher competence directly affected student engagement in higher education, while Camingao et al. (2024) highlighted that empathy and adaptability were critical in managing challenging classroom behaviors. Kamran et al. (2023) noted that teachers' attitudes shaped inclusive practices for learners with mild disabilities. Elbancol and Marquez (2025) and Dumaguing and Yango (2023) further confirmed that balancing empathy with firmness improved both student behavior and academic outcomes.

The study addressed the limited exploration of how teacher soft skills specifically contribute to behavior management in inclusive classrooms at Hilario P. Davide Sr. National High School. Its findings provide evidence for strengthening teacher competencies, enhancing classroom management strategies, and fostering inclusive, supportive learning environments. The objective of this study was to evaluate the relationship between teacher soft skills and student behavior management in inclusive classrooms and to propose an Action Plan that enhances teachers' capacity to create well-managed and inclusive learning environments.

Statement of the problem

This research sought to evaluate the relationship between teacher soft skills and student behavior management in inclusive classrooms at Hilario P. Davide Sr. National High School during the school year 2025–2026 as a basis for the development of an Action Plan. Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the teacher-respondents in terms of age, gender, years of teaching experience, and highest educational attainment?

2. To what degree do teachers perceive their soft skills as effective in managing student behavior in inclusive classrooms?
3. To what degree do teachers demonstrate management practices in handling student behavior in inclusive classrooms?
4. Is there a significant relationship between teacher soft skills and student behavior management in inclusive classrooms?
5. Based on the findings of the study, what Action Plan can be proposed?

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study provided a systematic and rigorous framework for examining the relationship between teacher soft skills and student behavior management in inclusive classrooms at Hilario P. Davide Sr. National High School. It established the research design, identified the participants and setting, described the instruments and procedures used to gather data, addressed ethical safeguards, and detailed the analytical techniques employed to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. Through this unified approach, the methodology supported a comprehensive investigation of how teachers' interpersonal and professional competencies relate to effective behavior management within inclusive educational contexts.

The study employed a descriptive correlational research design to describe the characteristics of the variables and to determine the nature and strength of the relationship between teacher soft skills and student behavior management without manipulating any conditions. This design was appropriate because it allowed the examination of associations between variables as they naturally occurred in the school setting, which aligned with ethical and practical considerations. By adopting this approach, the study was able to assess both teachers' perceptions of their soft skills and the extent to which these skills were demonstrated in actual classroom management practices, as well as to determine whether higher levels of soft skills were associated with more effective management of student behavior in inclusive classrooms.

The research was conducted at Hilario P. Davide Sr. National High School, a public secondary school operating under the Department of Education and serving a diverse student population. The school implemented inclusive education by accommodating learners with varying abilities, learning needs, and behavioral profiles within regular classroom settings. Although it was not formally designated as a Special Education center, the school actively promoted inclusivity and equitable learning opportunities. It offered both Junior High School and Senior High School programs, including Academic, Technical Vocational Livelihood, and Arts and Design tracks, resulting in classrooms characterized by a wide range of academic abilities, social skills, and behavioral tendencies. This environment provided a suitable and meaningful context for examining the application of teacher soft skills in managing student behavior in inclusive classrooms.

The respondents of the study consisted of thirty teachers who were assigned to inclusive classrooms during the school year 2025 to 2026. Purposive sampling was used to select participants to ensure that only teachers with direct experience in handling learners with diverse abilities and behavioral needs were included. The inclusion criteria required that respondents were currently teaching in inclusive classrooms, had at least one year of relevant experience, and were willing to participate and provide complete survey responses. Teachers who did not meet these

criteria were excluded. The sample size was considered sufficient to allow focused data collection and meaningful statistical analysis within the scope of the study.

Data were collected using an adapted survey questionnaire designed specifically for teachers handling inclusive classrooms. The instrument gathered information on the respondents' demographic characteristics, including age, gender, years of teaching experience, and highest educational attainment, which served as contextual variables for interpreting the findings. It also measured teachers' perceptions of their soft skills, such as communication, empathy, resilience, collaboration, adaptability, and related interpersonal competencies, using a four-point Likert scale. In addition, the questionnaire assessed the extent to which teachers demonstrated effective student behavior management practices in inclusive classrooms, focusing on actual classroom strategies and practices. The integration of these components enabled a comprehensive assessment of both perceived and demonstrated soft skills in relation to behavior management.

Prior to data collection, formal approval to conduct the study was obtained from the school administration through a transmittal letter addressed to the principal. Coordination with designated school representatives was carried out to identify eligible teacher participants. The purpose and objectives of the study were clearly explained to the respondents, with emphasis on voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the protection of their rights. Informed consent was secured from all participants before administering the questionnaires. The researcher personally distributed and collected the questionnaires during non-teaching hours to minimize disruption to instructional activities and to ensure clear instructions and consistent administration. Completed questionnaires were reviewed for completeness and accuracy, and only valid responses were included in the final data set.

Throughout the research process, ethical considerations were strictly observed. Participant anonymity and confidentiality were maintained by ensuring that no identifying information was disclosed in the analysis or reporting of results. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. All data were handled responsibly and used solely for academic purposes, ensuring the integrity and ethical soundness of the study.

The collected data were organized, tabulated, and subjected to appropriate statistical analyses. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and percentages, were used to summarize the demographic profile of the respondents. Weighted mean was applied to determine the degree of teachers' perceptions of their soft skills and the extent of their demonstrated behavior management practices. Standard deviation was computed to examine the variability and consistency of responses among participants. To determine the strength and direction of the relationship between teacher soft skills and student behavior management in inclusive classrooms, the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was employed. These analytical procedures provided a sound basis for interpreting the findings and for developing an Action Plan grounded in empirical evidence to enhance teacher soft skills and behavior management practices in inclusive educational settings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the results of the study based on data gathered from thirty teacher participants at Hilario P. Davide Sr. National High School. Guided by a descriptive correlational research design, purposive sampling was employed to ensure that only teachers assigned to inclusive classrooms during the school year 2025–2026 were included. Data were

collected using an adapted survey questionnaire that measured teachers' demographic characteristics, their perceptions of soft skills in managing student behavior, and the extent to which these skills were demonstrated in classroom practice. The analysis utilized descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and standard deviation, as well as inferential statistics using the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. The results are presented and interpreted in relation to the objectives of the study, with discussion grounded in both the empirical findings and relevant literature.

The demographic profile of the respondents provides an important context for understanding the findings on teacher soft skills and behavior management. In terms of age, the majority of the respondents were young teachers, with sixteen out of thirty or 53.33 percent belonging to the 20–25 age group. This was followed by six teachers or 20.00 percent aged 26–30 years, and four teachers or 13.33 percent aged 31–35 years. Only two teachers or 6.67 percent were aged 36–40 years, while one teacher each or 3.33 percent fell within the 41–45 and 46–50 age ranges. No respondents were aged 51 years and above. This distribution indicates that the teaching workforce in inclusive classrooms at Hilario P. Davide Sr. National High School is largely composed of early career educators. Such a profile suggests potential strengths, including adaptability and openness to innovation, but also highlights the need for structured support in developing classroom management competencies. Kanak (2024) emphasized that younger teachers in inclusive settings often rely heavily on soft skills to compensate for limited experience, making professional development in this area particularly critical.

Gender distribution showed that twenty-two teachers or 73.33 percent of the respondents were female, while eight teachers or 26.67 percent were male. The predominance of female teachers reflects broader trends in the teaching profession and has implications for classroom dynamics and behavior management. Mastam and Zaharudin (2024) noted that female teachers often demonstrate strong interpersonal sensitivity and relational approaches, which can foster positive classroom climates and support inclusive practices. In this context, the gender composition may contribute positively to teacher student relationships and collaborative approaches to managing student behavior.

With respect to length of service, fourteen teachers or 46.67 percent had one to five years of teaching experience, nine teachers or 30.00 percent had six to ten years, five teachers or 16.67 percent had eleven to fifteen years, and only one teacher or 3.33 percent had sixteen years or more of experience. This distribution reinforces the observation that most respondents are relatively early in their teaching careers. While newer teachers may bring enthusiasm and contemporary pedagogical perspectives, they may still be developing confidence and consistency in managing student behavior, particularly in inclusive classrooms. Fernandes, Jardim, and Lopes (2021) highlighted that soft skills such as adaptability, emotional regulation, and communication are especially important for less experienced teachers, as these competencies support effective classroom management during the early stages of professional practice.

Educational attainment data showed that sixteen teachers or 53.33 percent held a Bachelor's degree, eight teachers or 26.67 percent had earned Master's degree units, four teachers or 13.33 percent had completed a Master's degree, and only one teacher or 3.33 percent had Doctoral units or a completed Doctoral degree. This profile suggests that while most teachers possess adequate foundational preparation, relatively few have advanced academic training that may deepen theoretical understanding of inclusive education and behavior management. Calandri et al. (2025) underscored that higher educational attainment, when combined with emotional

competence, enhances teachers' ability to respond to diverse behavioral and social emotional needs. The limited number of teachers with advanced degrees highlights opportunities for further academic and professional growth within the institution.

Teachers' perceptions of their soft skills in managing student behavior were generally positive. Across twelve indicators, all weighted means fell within the "Agree" range, with an overall aggregate mean of 3.03 and an aggregate standard deviation of 0.78. The highest weighted means were observed for resilience when students resisted classroom rules or instructions and for clearly communicating behavioral expectations, both at 3.13. Indicators related to empathy toward disruptive students and addressing emotional needs underlying misbehavior each obtained weighted means of 3.07. Slightly lower but still positive perceptions were noted for collaboration with colleagues at 2.90 and confidence in handling students with special educational needs at 2.97. These results indicate that teachers generally perceive themselves as moderately competent in applying soft skills within inclusive classrooms.

The pattern of responses suggests that teachers feel confident in fundamental interpersonal skills such as communication, patience, and resilience, which are essential for managing behavior in diverse classrooms. However, the relatively lower ratings for collaboration and feedback utilization point to areas where additional support may be beneficial. This finding aligns with Almulla et al. (2025), who reported that while teachers often demonstrate strong individual soft skills, collaborative competencies require deliberate cultivation through professional learning communities and structured training. Similarly, Mitsea et al. (2021) emphasized that soft skills act as inclusion amplifiers only when teachers are supported in reflective and collaborative practice. The overall perception results therefore highlight both strengths and opportunities for targeted professional development.

In terms of demonstrated classroom management practices, teachers also rated themselves positively across all twelve indicators. The aggregate mean was 3.06 with an aggregate standard deviation of 0.27, indicating general agreement and relatively low variability in responses. The highest weighted means of 3.10 were recorded for early intervention when signs of misbehavior were observed and for modeling calm and appropriate behavior during disruptions. Most other indicators, including consistent implementation of rules, use of positive reinforcement, collaboration with colleagues, communication with parents, and consistent follow through on consequences, recorded weighted means of 3.07 or 3.03. The lowest weighted mean of 2.97 was observed for providing differentiated behavior strategies based on student needs.

These findings suggest that teachers demonstrate competence in routine and proactive classroom management practices, such as establishing rules, intervening early, and maintaining calm behavior. However, the slightly lower rating for differentiated behavior strategies indicates challenges in tailoring interventions to individual learners, which is a critical component of inclusive education. Garrote et al. (2020) emphasized that effective inclusion depends not only on consistent management routines but also on teachers' ability to individualize strategies based on students' unique behavioral profiles. Padgett (2021) similarly noted that targeted behavior skills training enhances teachers' capacity to move beyond general strategies toward more responsive and differentiated approaches. The results therefore indicate that while foundational management practices are in place, further development is needed to strengthen individualized behavior support.

The relationship between teachers' perceived soft skills and their demonstrated classroom management practices was examined using the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. The computed r value was 0.39, indicating a negligible positive correlation, with a p value of 0.21. Since the p value exceeded the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

This result indicates that there was no statistically significant relationship between teachers' self-perceived soft skills and their actual demonstration of management in handling student behavior.

This finding suggests a potential gap between perception and practice, where teachers' confidence in their soft skills does not necessarily translate into observable classroom management behaviors. Similar observations have been reported in previous research. Stevenson, VanLone, and Barber (2020) noted that misalignment between teacher preparation and classroom realities can result in discrepancies between perceived competence and actual practice. Qorib (2024) also found that differentiated instruction and inclusive practices are influenced by contextual and institutional factors, not solely by teachers' self-assessments. Moreover, Zhang and Zhang (2024) highlighted that external supports such as digital tools, mentoring, and administrative guidance can significantly affect how teacher competencies are enacted in practice. In the context of this study, factors such as limited experience, classroom complexity, and varying levels of institutional support may explain why perceived soft skills were not strongly reflected in demonstrated behavior management.

Overall, the findings provide a nuanced understanding of teacher soft skills and behavior management in inclusive classrooms at Hilario P. Davide Sr. National High School. The demographic profile reveals a predominantly young and early career teaching workforce with solid foundational preparation but limited advanced academic training. Teachers generally perceive themselves as possessing adequate soft skills and report satisfactory implementation of classroom management practices. However, the absence of a significant relationship between perception and demonstration underscores the need for targeted professional development that bridges theory and practice. These results contribute to the growing body of literature on inclusive education by highlighting the importance of sustained support, reflective practice, and contextual factors in translating teacher competencies into effective classroom management. The findings logically lead to the development of an Action Plan aimed at strengthening teachers' soft skills and enhancing their practical application in inclusive classroom settings.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined the relationship between teacher soft skills and student behavior management in inclusive classrooms at Hilario P. Davide Sr. National High School during the school year 2025 to 2026, with the ultimate goal of providing an empirical basis for an Action Plan. Drawing from a descriptive correlational research design and data gathered from thirty teachers assigned to inclusive classrooms, the study explored teachers' demographic characteristics, their perceptions of their own soft skills, their demonstrated classroom management practices, and the relationship between these variables. The synthesis of findings offers a comprehensive understanding of how teacher characteristics, perceptions, and practices interact within the context of inclusive education.

The demographic profile revealed that the teaching workforce handling inclusive classrooms was largely composed of young and early to mid-career educators. Most respondents were in early adulthood, with fewer teachers represented in older age groups, and female teachers comprised the majority of the sample. In terms of professional experience, nearly half of the teachers had only a few years of service, while a substantial number were in the mid stage of their careers, and only a very small proportion had long term teaching experience. Educational attainment data showed that most teachers held a bachelor's degree, with fewer respondents having

pursued or completed graduate or doctoral studies. These characteristics provide important context for interpreting the results, as they suggest a workforce with energy and adaptability but with varying levels of experience and advanced academic preparation, which may influence confidence, consistency, and sophistication in managing student behavior in inclusive classrooms.

The findings further indicated that teachers generally perceived their soft skills as effective in managing student behavior. Across key areas such as communication, empathy, patience, resilience, and adaptability, respondents consistently rated themselves positively. Teachers reported that they were able to adjust communication styles, show understanding toward students with behavioral challenges, maintain positive relationships, and clearly communicate behavioral expectations. However, slightly lower ratings were noted in areas related to collaboration with colleagues and confidence in handling students with special educational needs. These results suggest that while teachers possess a solid foundation of interpersonal and emotional competencies, certain aspects of soft skill application may benefit from targeted professional development and institutional support.

Consistent with these perceptions, teachers also reported that they demonstrated effective classroom management practices in inclusive settings. Respondents indicated that they regularly enforced classroom rules, used positive reinforcement, intervened early when misbehavior occurred, modeled calm behavior during disruptions, and maintained communication with parents or guardians. Reflective practices and collaboration with colleagues were also evident. Nevertheless, the practice of adjusting strategies based on individual student needs was rated slightly lower than other indicators, pointing to challenges in fully differentiating behavior management approaches in diverse classrooms. This finding underscores the complexity of inclusive classroom environments, where standard management routines must often be complemented by individualized strategies to address varied behavioral and learning needs.

Despite the generally positive perceptions and reported practices, the correlation analysis revealed that the relationship between teachers' perceived soft skills and their demonstrated management of student behavior was negligible and not statistically significant. This result indicates that teachers' self-assessments of their soft skills did not strongly predict how these skills were manifested in classroom management practices. The absence of a significant relationship suggests a possible gap between perception and practice, which may be influenced by factors such as limited teaching experience, classroom complexity, institutional constraints, or the lack of sustained mentoring and feedback mechanisms. These findings highlight that possessing or perceiving soft skills alone is insufficient to guarantee their consistent and effective application in real classroom situations.

Taken together, the results of the study demonstrate that teachers at Hilario P. Davide Sr. National High School generally view themselves as competent in soft skills and report satisfactory classroom management practices in inclusive settings. However, the lack of a significant relationship between perception and demonstration emphasizes the need for intentional strategies that bridge this gap. In this context, the proposed Action Plan emerges as a necessary and evidence-based response. The Action Plan is recommended to provide structured professional development opportunities, strengthen collaborative and reflective practices, and support teachers in translating perceived competencies into effective and differentiated classroom management behaviors. By implementing such targeted interventions, the school can enhance teacher capacity, promote more responsive behavior management, and further advance its commitment to inclusive education. Ultimately, these efforts are expected to contribute to more positive learning environments,

improved student behavior, and sustained professional growth among teachers, thereby reinforcing the broader goals of equity, inclusion, and holistic student development.

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