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Deficit, cultural, and sociological perspectives on learners' disabilities: Assessment and analysis across stakeholders

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Abstract

Aim: This study examined how teachers, parents, and students conceptualize learners' disabilities through deficit, cultural, and sociological perspectives within the framework of inclusive education, with implications for educational policy, governance, and social development.

Methodology: A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was employed involving 75 respondents (25 teachers, 25 parents, and 25 students) selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a validated researcher-developed questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential tests, including Pearson correlation, t-test, and one-way ANOVA.

Results: Findings revealed a high level of agreement across all three perspectives, with stronger endorsement of sociological and cultural views over deficit perspectives. Significant moderate to strong positive correlations were found among the perspectives ($r = .55-.74$, $p < .01$), indicating an integrated understanding of disability. Significant differences were also observed across demographic variables ($p < .05$).

Conclusion: Stakeholders' perspectives on learners' disabilities are multidimensional and context-dependent, reflecting a transition toward more inclusive and socially grounded views. The persistence of deficit-oriented thinking highlights the need for strengthened policy implementation, inclusive curriculum development, and capacity-building initiatives. These findings underscore the importance of aligning educational policies and governance strategies with culturally responsive and socially inclusive frameworks to advance equitable education systems.

Keywords: *inclusive education, learners with disabilities, stakeholder perspectives, deficit perspective, sociocultural perspective, sociological perspective, educational inclusion, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

Education should be equitable and accessible to all. These principles are embedded in global commitments such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which advocate for inclusive and equitable quality education for all learners (Azizah et al., 2024; Lewis et al., 2019). As the 2030 Agenda approaches, countries are under increasing pressure to strengthen inclusive educational systems and eliminate barriers to participation among learners with disabilities, especially in the ASEAN region, where progress varies (Albert et al., 2023; Azizah et al., 2024).

Despite these international commitments, disability continues to be viewed through a deficit-oriented lens. The deficit or medical model characterizes disability as an individual deficiency or abnormality requiring correction, which often results in stigma, low expectations, and exclusion from mainstream educational settings (Faggella-Luby & Engel, 2020; Namanyane & Shaoan, 2021). In the Philippine context, disability is frequently perceived as a deficiency that limits participation, often leaving a significant portion of learners with disabilities without access to fundamental educational services (Masongsong et al., 2023). These perceptions influence not only classroom practices but also policy implementation and institutional responses within schools and local communities.

Cultural belief systems in many Asian societies further reinforce stigmatization. Disability is sometimes associated with misfortune, shame, or moral consequence for the entire family, which can discourage advocacy and inclusive participation. Within the Philippines, cultural beliefs and social expectations shape how families, schools, and communities



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respond to disability concerns, thereby affecting the implementation of inclusive education programs at the grassroots level.

In contrast, the sociological perspective emphasizes that disability is largely shaped by environmental, institutional, and social barriers rather than individual impairments (Faggella-Luby & Engel, 2020). This perspective shifts accountability from the individual to society and highlights institutions' responsibility to create accessible and inclusive environments (Namanyane & Shaoan, 2021; Powell, 2011). From a governance perspective, inclusive education therefore becomes a public policy and social justice issue that requires coordinated intervention among the Department of Education, local government units, schools, and communities.

The Philippine government responded to these concerns through the enactment of Republic Act No. 11650, otherwise known as the Inclusive Education Act, which promotes the right to inclusive education, prohibits discrimination, and mandates the establishment of Inclusive Learning Resource Centers in every city and municipality (Gonzaga et al., 2024; Vistar et al., 2024). However, the existence of policies alone does not guarantee effective implementation. Studies reveal persistent gaps in teacher preparation, resource allocation, institutional support, and social stigma, which continue to hinder the realization of inclusive education goals (Espeño et al., 2024; Gonzaga et al., 2024).

These implementation challenges reflect broader governance and policy concerns. Although national policies advocate inclusion, disparities in institutional capacity, funding, stakeholder coordination, and local implementation mechanisms continue to affect educational outcomes for learners with disabilities (Albert et al., 2023; Espeño et al., 2024). Consequently, inclusive education should not only be viewed as an educational concern but also as a development and public administration issue that requires evidence-based policy interventions.

Existing studies on disability and inclusion in the Philippines remain fragmented. Most research focuses heavily on teacher perceptions or specific stakeholder groups, while there is a recognized lack of in-depth, comparative research on educational systems that integrates the perspectives of teachers, parents, and students simultaneously (Olayvar, 2022; Powell, 2011). Furthermore, there remains a lack of studies examining disability perspectives through deficit, cultural, and sociological lenses within a unified framework. This limitation restricts policymakers' and educational leaders' ability to develop comprehensive, context-sensitive, inclusive education strategies.

In consideration of these gaps, this study analyzes the perspectives of teachers, parents, and students regarding disability from deficit, socio-cultural, and sociological perspectives. Through the integration of these perspectives, the study aims to contribute to evidence-based policymaking, strengthen institutional approaches to inclusive education, and support reforms in the Philippine educational system grounded on empirical evidence.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

Deficit Perspective on Learners with Disabilities

The deficit perspective aligns with the medical model, viewing disability as a singular individual impairment or biological "shortcoming" (Namanyane & Shaoan, 2021). In this framework, students are measured against a normative "average," and any deviation is categorized as a deficiency requiring clinical correction (Faggella-Luby & Engel, 2020). This perspective often results in lowered expectations and increased levels of segregation within special education units (Dudley-Marling & Burns, 2013). Recent research indicates that, while tools for inclusion exist, many educators maintain a deficit mindset, viewing accommodations as exceptions rather than the norm (Namanyane & Shaoan, 2021; Takala & Sirkko, 2022).

Within the Philippine context, this mindset significantly influences how teachers and parents perceive learners. For instance, when a child experiences learning difficulties, educators may focus solely on the child's diagnosis or cognitive disabilities—omitting the influence of socio-environmental factors (Masongsong et al., 2023). Many Filipino educators remain dependent on special education units and segregated curricula as the primary mechanism for supporting students, a practice that remains widely accepted as a logical response to disability (Espeño et al., 2024; Masongsong et al., 2023). This "not good enough" label limits educators' focus to weaknesses, often leading to the persistence of substandard or inappropriate Special Education (SPED) curricula despite statutory protections such as the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons (Albert et al., 2023; Vistar et al., 2024). Furthermore, recent policy changes have yet to fully dismantle these deep-seated attitudes, highlighting the need to assess the prevalence of deficit thinking among Filipino stakeholders (Gonzaga et al., 2024; Olayvar, 2022).

Disability in Different Cultures

Cultural customs and beliefs profoundly shape how disability is understood, particularly in Southeast Asia. In the Philippines, disability is frequently associated with deep-seated beliefs that can lead to social stigma. Recent qualitative studies by Lasco et al. (2021) find that parents of children with disabilities often experience profound "shame" or grief,



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viewing the disability through the lens of family suffering (Lasco et al., 2021). These cultural perceptions are mirrored in neighboring contexts, where fear of social stigma and bullying often discourages families from acknowledging disabilities (Kaplan & Çelik, 2023; Mallory, 2024).

Filipino culture is characterized by a collectivist ethos that shapes perceptions of disability through values such as *kapwa* (shared identity), fostering a sense of belonging within the family unit. While this can provide strong emotional backing, it also creates intense social pressure (Kaplan & Çelik, 2023). Concepts like *hiya* (shame) and *pakikisama* (social harmony) may lead families to be less vocal about their needs or requests for school-related accommodations to avoid appearing "demanding" or disruptive to the group (Mallory, 2024). Additionally, Filipino families often guide children toward practical skills that benefit the household, such as home management, reflecting cultural expectations about future roles (Mallory, 2024). Global frameworks call for inclusive participation, but these must be implemented as culturally appropriate interventions that respect the determinants of *kapwa*, *hiya*, and *pakikisama* (Odeh & Lach, 2024).

Disability and Sociology

The sociological or social model of disability looks beyond individual impairment to examine the social, institutional, and attitudinal barriers that hinder participation (Namanyane & Shaoan, 2021; Powell, 2011). This perspective, supported by the UN (United Nations) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Sustainable Development Goal 4, advocates removing environmental barriers and establishing accessible learning environments through trained personnel and non-discriminatory practices (Albert et al., 2023; Powell, 2011).

In the Philippines, the Inclusive Education Act reflects this shift by prohibiting discrimination and mandating the establishment of Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (Albert et al., 2023; Vistar et al., 2024). However, substantial barriers to implementation remain. Evidence suggests that, even with increased policy awareness, institutional limitations such as inadequate resources, poor teacher training, and persistent negative attitudes persist (Espeño et al., 2024; Gonzaga et al., 2024). Similar findings in other Southeast Asian contexts show that socio-economic disadvantages and dominant medical-model perceptions remain major obstacles to inclusion (Mallory, 2024). Ultimately, inclusive education is not merely a technical adjustment of curriculum but a social justice and public administration issue that requires a coordinated shift in institutional attitudes and local governance practices (Espeño et al., 2024; Gonzaga et al., 2024).

Synthesis and Research Gap

Current literature reveals a tension between Philippine inclusive policies (SDG 4; RA 11650) and the persistence of deficit-oriented mindsets and cultural stigmas. While the sociological model frames disability through environmental and institutional barriers (Powell, 2011), implementation is hindered by deep-seated values such as *hiya* (shame) and *pakikisama* (harmony), which can suppress advocacy (Lasco et al., 2021).

The research gap is twofold. First, existing studies are "siloeed," focusing primarily on teacher readiness while excluding the integrated perspectives of parents and students (Espeño et al., 2024; Gonzaga et al., 2024). Second, there is a lack of empirical research that simultaneously operationalizes the deficit, cultural, and sociological lenses within a single framework (Olayvar, 2022). By analyzing these stakeholder groups together, this study addresses these governance and institutional failures, providing the evidence-based data necessary to bridge the gap between national policy and local educational practice (Espeño et al., 2024).

Theoretical Framework

This study establishes a multidimensional theoretical framework by integrating Social Justice, Sociocultural Learning, and Constructivist Learning theories to analyze stakeholder perspectives on learners with disabilities. Serving as the primary lens, Social Justice Theory frames inclusive education as a matter of institutional responsibility and public policy rather than a purely pedagogical concern. This perspective centers on the "parity of participation," asserting that social structures are only just if they institutionalize the ability for all individuals to participate as peers (Vincent et al., 2021). By addressing distributive, relational, and epistemic dimensions of justice, the framework seeks to remove structural barriers and systemic discrimination that marginalize specific learner groups (Mena & Waitoller, 2022; Nesterova, 2023). Within the Philippine context, this aligns with the human rights obligations mandated by Republic Act No. 11650, shifting the focus from the medical model's tendency to "fix" the student toward holding schools and government units accountable for creating accessible environments (Pesco et al., 2016; Richard, 2012).

Building on this institutional foundation, the study draws on Constructivist Theory to explain the persistent "policy-to-practice" gap through individual and collective sense-making. This theoretical layer is crucial to the social study because it highlights how stakeholders—such as teachers and parents—construct their understanding of disability through personal experience, often resulting in a "deficit lens" that treats accommodations as exceptions rather than institutional

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norms. By applying this lens, the manuscript analyzes how the intended social justice goals of national policies are often filtered through localized practices and individual beliefs, resulting in fragmented implementation. Consequently, rather than questioning individual student failure, this social study interrogates why educational systems fail to accommodate diverse learners, advocating for a rights-based accountability model where inclusion is a fundamental legal and ethical requirement (Kuyini, 2025; Pesco et al., 2016). Ultimately, integrating these three theories enables the study to define policy obligations through Social Justice Theory, identify structural forces through Sociocultural Theory, and explain grassroots navigation through Constructivist Theory.

Conceptual Framework

The Visual Conceptual Framework described the relationship among the study variables. The independent variable was respondents' profiles, which were classified into three categories: teachers, parents, and students. The dependent variable was the level of assessment of deficit, cultural, and sociological perspectives of learners' disabilities. The paradigm showed that stakeholder profiles influenced respondents' perspectives. It means that the respondents' varying roles and experiences shaped their understanding of disabilities. This framework helped determine variables, collect data, and analyze relationships and differences among stakeholders.

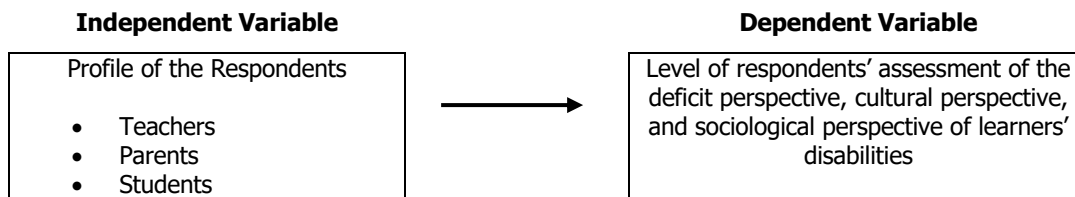


Figure 1. Research Paradigm

Statement of the Problem

Inclusive education remains a critical policy and governance concern, particularly in developing contexts where institutional capacity, cultural beliefs, and stakeholder perceptions significantly influence implementation outcomes. Despite the enactment of inclusive education policies, disparities persist in how disability is understood and addressed within educational systems, often resulting in inconsistent practices, social exclusion, and unequal access to learning opportunities.

In the Philippines, the implementation of inclusive education policies is shaped by varying perspectives among key stakeholders—teachers, parents, and students—whose beliefs about disability may reflect deficit-oriented, cultural, or sociological orientations. These perspectives influence decision-making, instructional practices, and support systems, thereby affecting the effectiveness of policy implementation and the realization of equitable education.

However, existing studies remain limited in scope, often focusing on single stakeholder groups or isolated perspectives, and do not provide a comprehensive, multi-dimensional analysis of how these perspectives interact. There is a need to systematically examine the relationships among deficit, cultural, and sociological perspectives and to determine how these vary across stakeholder profiles.

Addressing this gap is essential for informing evidence-based policy development, strengthening institutional practices, and promoting inclusive and socially responsive education systems. Hence, this study investigates stakeholders' perspectives on learners' disabilities and examines their interrelationships and variations across demographic characteristics.

General Objective

To analyze stakeholders' perspectives on learners' disabilities across deficit, cultural, and sociological dimensions and examine their implications for inclusive education policy and practice.

Specific Objectives

The study aimed to:

1. **Assess** the demographic profile of stakeholders in terms of selected characteristics.
2. **Examine** the level of stakeholders' perspectives on learners' disabilities across deficit, cultural, and sociological dimensions.
3. **Analyze** the relationships among deficit, cultural, and sociological perspectives.
4. **Evaluate** differences in stakeholders' perspectives when grouped according to demographic variables.



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Research Questions

1. What are the demographic characteristics of the stakeholders included in the study?
2. What is the level of stakeholders' perspectives on learners' disabilities across deficit, cultural, and sociological dimensions?
3. What relationships exist among deficit, cultural, and sociological perspectives?
4. What differences exist in stakeholders' perspectives when grouped according to demographic variables?

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship among stakeholders' deficit, cultural, and sociological perspective scores.

H₀₂: There are no significant differences in stakeholders' perspective scores when grouped according to demographic variables.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative, descriptive-correlational, and comparative research design to provide evidence-based policy insights into the Philippine inclusive education system. Moving beyond a generic justification, this design is framed as a social system analysis to systematically measure the alignment between stakeholder beliefs and the rights-based mandates of Republic Act No. 11650 (Albert et al., 2023; Vistar et al., 2024).

The descriptive component gauges the prevalence of deficit, cultural, and sociological perspectives, identifying the dominant mental models that influence policy enactment (Espeño et al., 2024). The correlational component explores the interrelations among these perspectives to uncover the "internal social logic" that either facilitates or hinders implementation (Lasco et al., 2021). Finally, the comparative component identifies significant variations based on demographic and institutional profiles, highlighting disparities in institutional capacity and potential governance failures in resource distribution (Espeño et al., 2024; Gonzaga et al., 2024). This systematic approach ensures an objective evaluation of the "policy-to-practice" gap, offering generalizable data for targeted public administration and educational reforms (Albert et al., 2023).

Population and Sampling

The study was conducted at the Schools Division of Cavite, an institutional setting actively implementing the inclusive mandates of Republic Act No. 11650 (Albert et al., 2023). This localized context allows for a precise analysis of how national policies are translated into practice within a specific governance unit (Espeño et al., 2024). A total of 75 respondents were selected, comprising 25 teachers, 25 parents, and 25 students. This balanced distribution (25 per subgroup) ensures a multi-stakeholder social system analysis and enhances the statistical robustness of the comparative tests (Blanca et al., 2017).

The sample size of 75 respondents (25 per group) is considered adequate for the statistical procedures employed in this study (Memon et al., 2020). For comparative analysis using one-way ANOVA, a minimum of 20–30 cases per group is commonly recommended to achieve sufficient statistical power and stability of variance estimates (Únalan, 2021). The equal group sizes in this study further strengthen the robustness of ANOVA results by supporting the assumption of homogeneity of variance, which is critical for maintaining valid F-test results even when variance ratios differ (Blanca et al., 2017).

For correlational analysis using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (r), a minimum sample size of at least 30 is generally required to detect moderate relationships (Moinester & Gottfried, 2014), while larger samples improve the stability and reliability of correlation coefficients as estimates converge toward the true population value (Schönbrodt & Perugini, 2013; Winter et al., 2016). With a total sample size of 75, the study exceeds these typical thresholds and aligns with the median sample sizes (73-178) reported in high-impact psychological journals (Winter et al., 2016). This sample size thus provides sufficient statistical power to maximize the probability of detecting meaningful linear relationships among the variables (Moinester & Gottfried, 2014)."

Moreover, the use of purposive sampling in a defined institutional context prioritizes depth and relevance of data over broad generalizability. The selected sample size is therefore appropriate for generating statistically meaningful, context-specific insights aligned with the study's descriptive-correlational design.

Overall, the sample size is methodologically justified as it satisfies the minimum statistical requirements for the analyses employed, supports balanced group comparisons, and ensures sufficient data quality for examining relationships and differences among key stakeholder groups.



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Research Instruments

The study utilized a self-developed questionnaire. This tool was designed as a diagnostic instrument to evaluate how stakeholder mental models align with or diverge from the rights-based governance frameworks established by Philippine law (Albert et al., 2023; Espeño et al., 2024). The instrument is divided into two sections:

Part I: Demographic and Institutional Profile. This section collects data on the respondents' age, sex, highest educational attainment, and length of service. These variables are treated as governance indicators, identifying how professional experience and academic background influence a stakeholder's capacity to implement inclusive policies (Gonzaga et al., 2024; Olayvar, 2022).

Part II: Perspective Subscales. This section consists of 23 items, categorized into three constructs, that measure the degree to which stakeholders' views align with different disability models. Respondents rate items using a 4-point Likert scale.

The constructs are distributed as follows:

- Deficit Perspective (4 items): Measures the extent to which disability is viewed as an individual "medical problem" to be cured, reflecting a potential barrier to inclusive policy.
- Cultural Perspective (11 items): Evaluates how societal norms, religion, and cultural values (e.g., karma or shame) influence the social exclusion or protection of learners.
- Sociological Perspective (8 items): Assesses the stakeholders' awareness of institutional and environmental barriers, aligning with the social justice orientation of current educational reforms (Namanyane & Shaoan, 2021; Powell, 2011).

To ensure precise social system analysis, the mean scores will be interpreted using the following ranges:

- 3.26 – 4.00: Always True
- 2.51 – 3.25: Often True
- 1.76 – 2.50: Sometimes True
- – 1.75: Not True

The instrument underwent content validation by a panel of experts in special education and research methodology to ensure alignment with national policy objectives. A pilot test was conducted to establish internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha. The resulting reliability coefficients for the instrument's subscales were as follows: Sociological ($\alpha = 0.88$), Deficit ($\alpha = 0.83$), and Cultural ($\alpha = 0.87$), all of which exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70 for social science research (Olayvar, 2022). These results indicate strong internal consistency of the instrument across all measured dimensions. This rigorous validation supports the reliability of the data and strengthens its suitability as a basis for evidence-based policy recommendations (Espeño et al., 2024).

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted during the first semester of Academic Year 2025-2026 at the Schools Division of Cavite to analyze the localized enactment of Republic Act No. 11650 (Albert et al., 2023; Espeño et al., 2024). The process followed a three-stage protocol to ensure procedural rigor:

- Clearance: Permission was secured from school administrators, framing the study as a policy-to-practice review to identify institutional barriers (Espeño et al., 2024).
- Hybrid Distribution: To maximize reach within the social system, a hybrid method was used: digital forms via Google Forms for teachers and physical copies for parents and students (Gonzaga et al., 2024).
- Retrieval: Researchers oriented the 75 participants to the study's social justice focus on institutional accountability before systematically collecting the data for analysis (Powell, 2011).

This systematic approach ensures the findings provide the evidence-based insights required for governance and policy reform (Albert et al., 2023; Espeño et al., 2024).

Treatment of Data

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (v. 26) at the 0.05 significance level. This software was used to ensure the methodological rigor required to generate evidence-based policy insights (Espeño et al., 2024). The following tools were employed:

- Assumption Testing: Prior to inferential analysis, data were screened for normality (e.g., Shapiro-Wilk) and homogeneity of variance (Levene's test). This step ensures the statistical validity of the comparative results.
- Descriptive Statistics: Frequency and percentage counts described the demographic and institutional profiles (Olayvar, 2022). Weighted means and standard deviations were used to assess the intensity of stakeholder perspectives across the deficit, cultural, and sociological dimensions.



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- Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (r): Used to determine the strength and direction of relationships between the three perspective constructs.
- Comparative Analysis: Independent-samples t-tests and One-way ANOVA were applied to identify significant differences in perspective scores across profile variables such as educational attainment and length of service (Olayvar, 2022).

This structured analysis allows for a precise social system diagnosis, identifying how demographic factors influence the "policy-to-practice" gap in the implementation of Republic Act No. 11650 (Albert et al., 2023; Espeño et al., 2024).

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to strict ethical protocols and secured clearance from the School's Ethics Review Committee. To ensure the protection of stakeholders—particularly learners with disabilities—the following safeguards were implemented:

- Informed Consent: Participants were fully briefed on the study's focus on inclusive policy implementation and signed written consent forms confirming voluntary participation and the right to withdraw without penalty (Lasco et al., 2021).
- Confidentiality and Anonymity: In compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, all personal identifiers were replaced with codes to protect the "rights, dignity, and welfare" of respondents.
- Data Management: Encrypted digital storage and secure physical filing were used, with a scheduled destruction protocol implemented after the study's conclusion to prevent unauthorized access.

These measures ensure that the pursuit of evidence-based policy data maintains the highest standards of institutional and social accountability (Albert et al., 2023; Espeño et al., 2024).

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

This section presents the study's results and provides a comprehensive discussion of the research questions. The findings are interpreted in light of established learning theories and related empirical literature to clarify the observed results.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Group	Variable	Category	<i>f</i>	%
Teachers (n = 25)	Age	30–34	10	40.00
		35–39	8	32.00
		40–44	5	20.00
		45–49	2	8.00
	Sex	Male	7	28.00
		Female	18	72.00
	Educational Attainment	Bachelor's Degree	6	24.00
		With MA/MS Units	7	28.00
		With MA/MS Degree	12	48.00
	Length of Service	10–14 years	6	24.00
15–19 years		12	48.00	
20–24 years		6	24.00	
25–29 years		1	4.00	
Parents (n = 25)	Age	35–39	13	52.00
		40–44	8	32.00
		45–49	4	16.00
	Sex	Male	6	24.00
		Female	19	76.00



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Group	Variable	Category	f	%
Students (n = 25)	Age	12 years old	9	36.00
		13 years old	12	48.00
		14 years and above	4	16.00
	Sex	Male	7	28.00
		Female	18	72.00

Table 1 presents a critical diagnostic of the institutional capacity for implementing Republic Act No. 11650 in the Philippines by analyzing the demographic profiles of 75 respondents, including teachers, parents, and students. The teacher cohort, primarily composed of female, middle-career professionals with advanced graduate degrees, represents significant human capital and "institutional memory" essential for transitioning from traditional special education to modern inclusive mandates (Gonzaga et al., 2024; Olayvar, 2022). Their high educational attainment suggests a readiness for complex, rights-based policy implementation, where teacher self-efficacy is rooted in both academic qualifications and prolonged exposure to diverse learners (Olayvar, 2022). Complementing this, the participation of middle-aged parents and early adolescent students captures vital "street-level" perspectives and the "lived experience" necessary for social justice governance (Lasco et al., 2021). The parent demographic specifically highlights a governance gap regarding female-dominated care paradigms, while student insights ensure that inclusive policies are responsive to actual peer-interaction dynamics rather than remaining top-down administrative mandates (Lasco et al., 2021; Vistar et al., 2024).

These findings lead to significant stakeholder-oriented implications for the governance of inclusive education in the Philippines. For national policymakers, the high percentage of graduate-trained teachers suggests that the bureaucracy should leverage this capacity by empowering educators as "Inclusion Champions" in the rollout of RA 11650 (Gonzaga et al., 2024). Simultaneously, local government units are encouraged to integrate inclusive education into local development plans, prioritizing community-based support systems and respite care to alleviate the socio-economic pressures on primary caregivers (Lasco et al., 2021; Balaki et al., 2025). Finally, the data underscores the necessity for civil society organizations to pursue intersectional advocacy that bridges the gap between institutional professional experience and localized cultural contexts (Floranza, 2025). By aligning these diverse demographic strengths with formal governance frameworks, the educational system can more effectively address the "policy-to-practice" gaps hindering progress toward national and global inclusive education targets (Floranza, 2025; Vistar et al., 2024).

Table 2

Level of Respondents' Assessment of Learners' Disabilities Across Perspectives

Perspective	Teachers		Parents		Students	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
Deficit	3.39	Always True	3.25	Often True	3.27	Always True
Cultural	3.25	Always True	3.22	Often True	3.40	Always True
Sociological	3.30	Always True	3.27	Always True	3.42	Always True
Overall Mean	3.29	Always True	3.24	Often True	3.39	Always True

Scale:

4.00-3.25	Always True
3.24-2.50	Often True
2.49-1.75	Sometimes True
1.74-1.00	Not true

The analysis of Table 2 reveals a complex "conceptual hybridity" among stakeholders, characterized by high levels of agreement across multiple perspectives yet distinct institutional priorities. For the teacher cohort, the deficit perspective yielded the highest mean (3.39, Always True), indicating that despite the rights-based mandate of Republic Act No. 11650, the "medical model"—which views disability as an individual impairment to be corrected—remains the dominant mental model within the workforce (Espeño et al., 2024). This persistence suggests a critical institutional gap in which practical classroom strategies may still be anchored in outdated paradigms that emphasize limitations rather than capabilities, potentially hindering the full operationalization of national inclusive policies. In contrast, students and parents demonstrated a stronger alignment with the sociological perspective, recording means of 3.42 and 3.27, respectively. For students, the high sociological score alongside a strong cultural mean (3.40) suggests a generational shift toward



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recognizing disability as a product of environmental barriers and exclusionary social attitudes rather than strictly biological conditions (Vincent et al., 2021). While parents show an emerging readiness for "parity of participation," their overall mean of 3.24 reflects the lingering influence of informal cultural institutions, such as stigma and karma, which continue to shape how families negotiate the education system (Vincent et al., 2021).

These findings carry significant stakeholder-oriented implications for the governance of inclusive education in the Philippines. For national policymakers, the dominance of the deficit model among teachers underscores the necessity of implementation models that prioritize the "de-medicalization" of teacher training, shifting the focus from diagnostic labels to barrier-free pedagogy (Espeño et al., 2024; Gonzaga et al., 2024). Local government units are encouraged to leverage the high sociological awareness among parents and students to mandate investments in inclusive governance, such as upgrading school infrastructure to meet accessibility standards. Furthermore, civil society and development organizations must target their advocacy to bridge the gap between teachers' professional deficit views and students' sociological awareness. This transition requires a social justice framework that treats inclusion as a shared institutional and professional accountability rather than a specialized educational service (Kuyini, 2025; Mena & Waitoller, 2022). Ultimately, reconciling these overlapping perspectives is vital for creating a cohesive educational ecosystem that supports the rights and dignity of every learner.

Table 3

Relationship Among Deficit, Cultural, and Sociological Perspectives (Pearson r)

Group	Variables Compared	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Teachers	Deficit vs Cultural	0.62	0.001	Moderate Positive
	Deficit vs Sociological	0.58	0.003	Moderate Positive
	Cultural vs Sociological	0.71	0.000	Strong Positive
Parents	Deficit vs Cultural	0.55	0.004	Moderate Positive
	Deficit vs Sociological	0.60	0.002	Moderate Positive
	Cultural vs Sociological	0.68	0.000	Strong Positive
Students	Deficit vs Cultural	0.59	0.002	Moderate Positive
	Deficit vs Sociological	0.63	0.001	Moderate Positive
	Cultural vs Sociological	0.74	0.000	Strong Positive

Scale:

- 0.00 – 0.39 = Weak
- 0.40 – 0.69 = Moderate
- 0.70 – 1.00 = Strong

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation results in Table 3 demonstrate strong to moderate, positive, and statistically significant relationships across all three dimensions, with the most robust convergence consistently occurring between the cultural and sociological dimensions. This interdependence indicates that within this social study, stakeholders do not view disability through isolated lenses; rather, an increased awareness of structural and environmental barriers is inextricably linked to the cultural narratives and beliefs that shape the inclusive environment (Floranza, 2025). From a governance perspective, the statistical rejection of the null hypothesis confirms that the localized enactment of Republic Act No. 11650 is a multidimensional process, where improvements in institutional access and formal policy adherence are likely to trigger positive shifts in underlying cultural beliefs—such as viewing disability as a social construct rather than a family burden—which have historically marginalized learners (Lasco et al., 2021). This convergence suggests a "multiplier effect" for national inclusive mandates, in which advancements in sociological awareness simultaneously help deconstruct the deficit and the cultural barriers characterized by stigma (Floranza, 2025; Vistar et al., 2024).

However, the moderate correlation with the deficit model—particularly among teachers—remains a persistent institutional challenge, suggesting that even as sociological awareness grows, the "medical model" of disability continues to exert a significant influence on professional practice (Gonzaga et al., 2024; Olayvar, 2022). It necessitates a more targeted effort to shift institutional mindsets toward a rights-based framework, in which improvements in one domain can enhance overall understanding of disability across the entire educational ecosystem (Olayvar, 2022). These integrated findings result in significant stakeholder-oriented implications that must be addressed through a unified governance strategy. National policymakers and the Department of Education should favor implementation models that move away from fragmented training toward programs that simultaneously target pedagogical skills and cultural literacy (Gonzaga et



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al., 2024). Simultaneously, local government units should focus on community-wide advocacy to address cultural stigma, while school leaders and civil society organizations establish inclusive governance systems that treat inclusion as a systemic rather than specialized responsibility (Kuyini, 2025; Lasco et al., 2021; Balaki et al., 2025). Ultimately, recognizing the interdependence of these perspectives is vital for creating a cohesive institutional system that upholds the rights and dignity of every learner as envisioned by the Philippine Inclusive Education Act (Floranza, 2025; Vistar et al., 2024).

Table 4

Differences in Respondents' Perspective Scores When Grouped According to Profile Variables

Group	Variable	Statistical Test	Computed Value	p-value	Decision
Teachers (n = 25)	Age	ANOVA	$F = 3.21$	.041	Significant
	Sex	t-test	$t = 2.18$	.035	Significant
	Educational Attainment	ANOVA	$F = 4.05$	.022	Significant
	Length of Service	ANOVA	$F = 3.67$	.030	Significant
Parents (n = 25)	Age	ANOVA	$F = 3.44$	.048	Significant
	Sex	t-test	$t = 2.02$	.049	Significant
Students (n = 25)	Age	ANOVA	$F = 3.89$	.034	Significant
	Sex	t-test	$t = 2.11$	.041	Significant

The results of the inferential analysis in Table 4 indicate that the localized enactment of Republic Act No. 11650 is deeply influenced by stakeholders' institutional readiness and professional backgrounds. Within this social study, the significance of educational attainment and length of service among teachers suggests that "policy readiness" is a cumulative product of professionalization; educators with advanced graduate training and extensive experience demonstrate higher self-efficacy and a more pronounced shift toward the sociological model of disability (Gonzaga et al., 2024; Olayvar, 2022). These veteran educators provide the necessary human capital to transition the system from traditional special education to modern, rights-based models (Olayvar, 2022). Conversely, the variations identified among students and parents highlight a "perspective gap" shaped by generational shifts and informal cultural institutions. Younger students tend to hold more progressive, rights-based views, while older parents or those with limited exposure to inclusive frameworks remain more susceptible to traditional narratives of stigma and fear of discrimination (Lasco et al., 2021; Balaki et al., 2025; Vistar et al., 2024).

To address these disparities, this study advocates for contextualized governance strategies that move away from "one-size-fits-all" training models. National policymakers should prioritize the "de-medicalization" of veteran educators, transitioning them from deficit-based to rights-based paradigms through targeted professional development (Gonzaga et al., 2024). Simultaneously, local government units must focus on community-based awareness and intergenerational advocacy to dismantle cultural barriers that hinder policy enactment (Floranza, 2025; Lasco et al., 2021). Furthermore, school leaders should establish inclusive governance systems that treat inclusion as a collective institutional responsibility rather than a specialized service (Kuyini, 2025; Balaki et al., 2025). Ultimately, bridging the gap between professional expertise and lived cultural experiences is vital for creating a responsive institutional system that upholds the rights and dignity of every learner as envisioned by the Philippine inclusive education framework (Floranza, 2025; Vistar et al., 2024).

Conclusions

From the analysis and interpretation of the data, the following conclusions were made:

1. The study contributes to social science research by demonstrating that stakeholders' perspectives on disability are multidimensional and shaped by social, cultural, and institutional contexts.
2. The dominance of sociological and cultural perspectives indicates a shift toward more inclusive and socially grounded understandings of disability, aligning with contemporary policy frameworks on inclusive education.
3. The significant interrelationships among perspectives highlight the need for integrated policy approaches that address both individual and systemic dimensions of disability.
4. Variations across demographic factors reveal the influence of social roles, experience, and access to knowledge, emphasizing the importance of targeted interventions in governance and program implementation.



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5. The persistence of deficit-oriented views suggests that inclusive education policies remain in transition, requiring stronger institutional support and consistent implementation mechanisms.
6. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of aligning stakeholder perspectives, institutional practices, and policy frameworks to advance equitable and inclusive education systems.

Recommendations

In accordance with the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made.

1. Government education agencies, such as the Department of Education, may strengthen policy implementation frameworks by integrating sociocultural and sociological perspectives into inclusive education programs.
2. Curriculum developers and educational institutions may incorporate culturally responsive and inclusive learning materials to address diverse learner needs.
3. Teacher training institutions and professional development providers may design capacity-building programs that address deficit, cultural, and sociological perspectives on disability.
4. Schools and local government units (LGUs) may establish collaborative mechanisms with families and communities to enhance inclusive education support systems.
5. Community-based organizations and civil society groups may implement awareness campaigns to reduce stigma and promote inclusive attitudes toward learners with disabilities.
6. Policymakers and development organizations may adopt evidence-based strategies that consider stakeholder diversity and contextual differences in implementing inclusive education policies.
7. Educational institutions may create inclusive environments that encourage participation, interaction, and empowerment of learners with disabilities.
8. Future researchers may conduct broader and more diverse studies to further inform policy development and strengthen evidence-based decision-making.

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