



## *Non-SPED teachers' efforts to maintain and develop grit in an inclusive classroom, and challenges in sustaining grit*

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### ABSTRACT

Grit, defined as sustained perseverance and passion for long-term goals, has been linked to teacher resilience and effectiveness, but its manifestation among non-SPED teachers in inclusive settings remains underexplored. This study examined how non-SPED teachers demonstrate grit, the factors that support it, and the challenges they encounter in sustaining it. A descriptive phenomenological approach was employed to capture the lived experiences of five non-SPED secondary teachers in Laoag City. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis. Findings revealed that non-SPED teachers demonstrate grit through perseverance in teaching, instructional adaptability, collaborative engagement, and student-centered motivation. Factors sustaining grit included personal dispositions, professional experience, training, supportive school environments, relational networks, and commitment to continuous learning. Challenges such as difficulties in managing diverse learning needs, limited training in inclusive pedagogy, heavy workload, time pressure, and extensive paperwork contribute to emotional exhaustion, reduced patience, and feelings of isolation. The study concludes that grit is a multidimensional, dynamic construct shaped by personal, professional, and contextual factors. Cultivating teacher grit through professional development, mentorship, institutional support, and policy interventions is essential to enhance teacher resilience, instructional effectiveness, and inclusive education outcomes.

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## *Introduction*

Inclusive education has become a cornerstone of global educational reform, emphasizing every learner's right to access quality education regardless of ability, background, or learning needs; however, this shift toward equity and social justice has intensified the professional demands placed on teachers, particularly non-special education (non-SPED) teachers who often lack formal training in special education and adequate institutional support (Lucena-Rodríguez et al., 2025; Vergara et al., 2025). In inclusive classrooms, these teachers must continuously differentiate instruction, manage complex behavioral and

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academic needs, and collaborate with specialists and families, making teaching a long-term, effort-intensive endeavor rather than a series of short-term tasks.

It is within these sustained and demanding conditions that grit originally defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals (Duckworth et al., 2007) and later reconceptualized as persistence of effort and consistency of interest despite setbacks (Lee & Park, 2024; Zhang et al., 2025) emerges as a critical psychological resource enabling non-SPED teachers to remain committed to inclusive practices even when progress is slow, resources are scarce, and emotional strain is high. Teachers with high grit can sustain motivation, continuously refine instructional strategies, and uphold inclusive values in the face of repeated challenges, thereby translating policy mandates into meaningful classroom practice. Empirical evidence further indicates that grit significantly predicts teacher well-being, instructional quality, and professional commitment in inclusive settings (Lee & Park, 2024; Santos & Dela Cruz, 2025), yet the processes through which non-SPED teachers cultivate and maintain grit remain insufficiently understood, particularly in systems with limited access to specialized training and sustained professional development.

Contemporary research suggests that grit is shaped through the interaction of personal dispositions, professional experiences, and contextual support structures, indicating that it is not merely an individual trait but also a socially and organizationally constructed capacity influenced by mentorship, collegial support, leadership practices, workload, emotional demands, and resource availability. Drawing on Duckworth et al.'s (2007) framework, this study positions grit as the central construct linking teacher psychology to inclusive pedagogy and seeks to identify the personal, professional, and systemic conditions that sustain or hinder grit among non-SPED teachers, with the ultimate goal of informing teacher education, professional learning systems, and policy initiatives that enhance teacher effectiveness, reduce burnout, and improve learning outcomes for students with disabilities.

Despite the growing body of literature on grit and teacher resilience, limited research has examined how non-SPED teachers sustain grit in inclusive classrooms within the Philippine context. Existing studies tend to emphasize student outcomes or general measures of teacher resilience, overlooking the complex interplay of personal, professional, and systemic influences on teachers' long-term perseverance. Addressing this gap is critical to developing contextually grounded, evidence-based interventions that strengthen teacher capacity and improve inclusive education outcomes nationwide.

## ***Literature review***

This review examines the existing literature on non-special education (non-SPED) teachers' demonstration of grit in inclusive education settings, highlighting their perseverance, commitment, and the challenges they encounter.

### ***Grit in education***

Grit, which refers to sustained perseverance and passion for long-term goals, has been established as a significant psychological construct in educational research. Initially conceptualized by Duckworth and colleagues, grit comprises two key dimensions: perseverance of effort and consistency of interest, which

enable individuals to maintain effort and motivation over extended periods despite challenges and setbacks (Duckworth et al., 2007; Credé et al., 2017). While the foundational work predates 2016, contemporary research has continued to refine and expand the concept within teaching and learning contexts. Studies indicate that grit influences not only student outcomes but also teachers' professional behaviors, including sustained engagement with instructional practice, adaptive problem-solving, and resilience in the face of classroom challenges (Lee & Park, 2024). For example, research on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher engagement highlights that educators with higher levels of grit are more likely to persist with innovative instructional methods and adapt strategies to meet diverse learner needs, demonstrating the trait's relevance for professional effectiveness and commitment.

Further, research among pre-service and in-service teachers suggests that grit's dimensions are closely related to motivational orientations, career intentions, and professional perseverance. This evidence positions grit as a non-cognitive trait that not only supports sustained engagement and reflective practice but also enables teachers to navigate complex classroom environments and pursue long-term professional goals. Collectively, these findings underscore the increasing relevance of grit in teacher development, suggesting that cultivating perseverance and consistent interest is central to fostering instructional effectiveness, resilience, and adaptive capacity in educational settings.

### ***Grit in inclusive education***

Inclusive education requires teachers to manage diverse classrooms, differentiate instruction, and collaborate with specialists and families to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities. Inclusive pedagogical frameworks, originating from foundational work on inclusive practice, which emphasize expanding learning opportunities for all learners rather than differentiating only for some, have increasingly informed how educators conceptualize and enact equitable teaching (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Deppeler, Loreman, & Smith, 2022). Contemporary scholarship expands this view by characterizing inclusive pedagogy as an approach rooted in teacher beliefs, adaptive practice, and an ethic of high expectations for all learners (e.g., Deppeler et al., 2022; De Boer et al., 2019).

In the context of special education, grit, a teacher's sustained perseverance and passion for long-term professional goals, has emerged as a pertinent construct for understanding how educators navigate the ongoing challenges of inclusive practice. Recent studies suggest that grit contributes to teachers' ability to sustain engagement with complex instructional demands, maintain reflective and adaptive practices, and persist despite systemic barriers such as limited resources or professional support (Lee & Park, 2024; Zhang et al., 2025). Research involving preservice and in-service teachers indicates that higher levels of grit are linked to stronger motivational orientations and career commitment, particularly in contexts requiring high levels of instructional differentiation and resilience (Lee & Park, 2024). Qualitative investigations of special education and inclusive practice further suggest that teachers with greater perseverance and a sustained commitment to equity are more likely to remain engaged over time and apply adaptive strategies that respond to learner diversity (Purnomo et al., 2024). Together, these findings underscore the importance of examining grit not only as a personal disposition but also as a quality shaped by professional learning environments, reflective practice, and the collaborative cultures that underpin effective inclusive education.

### ***Demonstration of grit by non-SPED teachers***

Empirical research indicates that non-special education teachers demonstrate grit through a variety of professional behaviors, particularly when navigating the challenges of inclusive classrooms. Grit is expressed through instructional adaptability and reflective practice, which enable teachers to meet the diverse needs of learners despite limited formal special education training. Recent studies show that non-SPED teachers engage in self-directed learning, participate in targeted professional development, and modify lessons to ensure equitable access to learning (Collado Meril, 2025; Jardinez, 2024). These practices reflect a sustained commitment to student success, highlighting the cognitive and emotional components of grit as teachers persist in implementing differentiated instruction and adaptive strategies in complex classroom environments.

Additionally, grit is manifested in collaborative and relational practices. Non-SPED teachers often work closely with peers, special education colleagues, and professional learning communities to share strategies, problem-solve, and sustain motivation (Lee & Park, 2024; Smith & Dela Cruz, 2023). Reflective monitoring of student progress, adaptive instructional decision-making, and engagement in teamwork further illustrate perseverance in practice. Collectively, these findings emphasize that grit among non-SPED teachers is multidimensional, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and social components. This perspective positions teacher grit not solely as an individual trait but as a set of professional behaviors shaped by reflective practice, collaboration, and ongoing learning within inclusive educational settings.

### ***Factors contributing to non-SPED teachers' grit***

Recent literature suggests that grit in inclusive classrooms is sustained by a combination of personal dispositions and professional factors that work together to support teachers' long-term perseverance. Personal variables such as intrinsic motivation, resilience, a growth mindset, and emotional stability have been linked to greater persistence in educational settings, enabling teachers to remain committed in the face of challenges (Lee & Park, 2024; Santos & Dela Cruz, 2025). These dispositions support sustained engagement by promoting adaptive coping strategies and reflective practice, which help teachers respond proactively to diverse learner needs. Professional factors also play a significant role: prior teaching experience, participation in inclusive education training, and access to structured mentorship strengthen teachers' self-efficacy and pedagogical competence. Studies indicate that targeted professional development and mentoring programs foster confidence, skill acquisition, and a sense of belonging among teachers, all of which are associated with higher levels of grit (Gal, 2025; Pancito, 2024). Through these personal and professional avenues, teachers develop the cognitive and affective resources necessary for sustained commitment in inclusive classrooms.

In addition to individual and professional influences, contextual and institutional factors critically shape the development and maintenance of teacher grit. Supportive school leadership, a positive school climate, and adequate resource availability have been shown to enhance teachers' sense of efficacy and willingness to persevere, particularly when educators feel valued and supported in their practice (Gal,

Abun et al., *Divine Word International Journal of Management and Humanities* 5(1)(2026) 2871-28 2025; Ramos & Ventura, 2023). Conversely, systemic constraints such as excessive workload, insufficient planning time, and limited instructional resources can undermine teachers' perseverance by increasing stress and reducing opportunities for collaborative problem-solving and professional growth. This interaction between personal agency and environmental support highlights that grit is not merely an individual trait but is also embedded within broader organizational and contextual systems. Collectively, this review underscores the importance of multifaceted supports, including emotional, professional, and institutional resources, in fostering and sustaining grit among non-SPED teachers in inclusive education settings.

### ***Challenges in sustaining grit***

Despite their dedication, non-SPED teachers face numerous challenges in maintaining grit within inclusive education contexts. A key barrier is the lack of specialized training in special education, which often leaves teachers feeling underprepared to meet the diverse learning needs of students and undermines their confidence and self-efficacy (Pancito, 2024; Lee & Park, 2024). The absence of formal preparation can intensify feelings of professional inadequacy, particularly when teachers are tasked with differentiating instruction for students with complex learning profiles. Insufficient institutional support, including limited access to resources, inadequate support staff, and large class sizes, further exacerbates the cognitive, physical, and emotional demands of inclusive teaching (Jardinez, 2024; Ramos & Ventura, 2023).

Classroom management challenges, such as addressing behavioral issues, student disengagement, and passive resistance, also strain teachers' perseverance and energy. These factors disrupt instructional processes, increase stress levels, and can erode motivation over time (Pancito, 2024; Santos & Dela Cruz, 2025). The cumulative effect of these stressors contributes to emotional and psychological fatigue, heightening the risk of burnout and reducing teachers' ability to sustain long-term commitment to inclusive practices. Collectively, the literature highlights that sustaining grit is not solely an individual endeavor but is influenced heavily by professional preparation, institutional support, and classroom dynamics, underscoring the need for systemic interventions to support teachers' perseverance in inclusive education settings.

### ***Research questions***

This study explored the grit of non-special education (non-SPED) teachers in inclusive education settings. Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do non-SPED teachers demonstrate grit in inclusive education?
2. What factors contribute to the development and maintenance of grit among non-SPED teachers in inclusive education?
3. What challenges do non-SPED teachers encounter in sustaining grit while teaching learners with disabilities in inclusive education settings?

## ***Research methodology***

This chapter presents the research design, sources of data, including the study locale, population, and sampling instrumentation; data collection procedures; tools for data analysis; and the ethical considerations observed throughout the research process.

### ***Research design***

This study employed a descriptive phenomenological design, which is appropriate for exploring the lived experiences of non-special education (non-SPED) teachers as they demonstrate grit in inclusive education settings. The phenomenological approach allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' subjective experiences, capturing the emotional, cognitive, and professional dimensions of perseverance, motivation, and adaptive strategies (Creswell, 2013). This design is particularly well-suited for investigating complex psychological constructs such as grit, as it emphasizes the rich, contextualized experiences of teachers while providing insights into how personal dispositions, professional practices, and environmental factors interact to sustain or challenge grit in inclusive education.

### ***Locale of the data***

The study was conducted in selected secondary schools within the Schools Division of Laoag City, where inclusive education has been implemented in accordance with the Department of Education's framework. These schools were specifically chosen because they serve a heterogeneous student population, including learners with disabilities, providing a contextually rich environment for examining how non-special education (non-SPED) teachers cultivate and sustain grit in inclusive education settings. The selected schools offer opportunities to observe and understand the professional practices, challenges, and adaptive strategies of teachers working with diverse learners.

### ***Population and sampling***

Participants consisted of non-SPED teachers currently teaching in inclusive classrooms. They were purposively selected to ensure that each had at least two years of experience in inclusive education. This sample size aligns with phenomenological research, which prioritizes depth of insight over breadth, enabling rich, detailed accounts of lived experiences (Van Manen, 2016). The selection criteria also ensured participants had substantial exposure to the challenges and demands of inclusive classrooms.

### ***Instrumentation and data collection***

Data were gathered through semi-structured, open-ended interviews, allowing participants to provide detailed narratives about their experiences. An interview guide, developed in alignment with the study objectives, was validated by experts in education and qualitative research. Interviews focused on Teachers' understanding and expression of grit in inclusive classrooms, factors that sustain perseverance and motivation, and challenges in maintaining grit while teaching learners with disabilities.

The data collection process involved several key stages. First, permission was sought from the Division Office and school heads before approaching potential participants. After obtaining approval, participants were provided with an informed consent form explaining the purpose of the study, confidentiality measures, and their rights as participants.

Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via online video conferencing, depending on participant availability, and lasted approximately 20–30 minutes. All sessions were audio-recorded with participant consent, and field notes were taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual details. Follow-up questions were asked as needed for clarification.

All recordings were transcribed verbatim. The interview guide was piloted with two non-SPED teachers not included in the final sample, and minor adjustments were made based on their feedback to improve question clarity and flow.

### ***Tools for data analysis***

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for thematic analysis to ensure a systematic and rigorous interpretation of qualitative data. The process began with familiarization through repeated reading of transcripts, followed by initial coding to identify key statements related to teachers' experiences of grit. Related codes were then grouped into themes reflecting patterns of perseverance, motivation, and resilience among non-SPED teachers. These themes were reviewed, refined, and clearly defined to ensure accuracy and relevance to the study's objectives. Finally, the themes were integrated into a coherent narrative addressing the research questions.

### ***Ethical considerations***

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the research process. Before data collection, participants received digital informed consent forms outlining the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. All data were treated with strict confidentiality; participants' names and school affiliations were replaced with pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

Audio recordings, transcripts, and consent forms were securely stored in password-protected digital folders accessible only to the researcher. Given the emotional dimension of the topic, participants were also provided with contact information for professional support should they experience any form of distress during or after participation. The study adhered to the ethical guidelines set forth by the American Educational Research Association (AERA, 2011) and the institution's research ethics committee.

Trustworthiness in this study was established using the criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Credibility was ensured through prolonged engagement with participants and member checking. Participants were invited to review their interview transcripts to verify the accuracy of their statements and the researcher's interpretations. In addition, peer debriefing with two qualitative research experts was conducted to minimize researcher bias and validate emerging themes.

Dependability was achieved by maintaining a comprehensive audit trail of the research process, including interview protocols, transcription procedures, coding frameworks, and documentation of theme development. This systematic record enables future researchers to follow and potentially replicate the analytic procedures.

Confirmability was established through reflexive journaling, wherein the researcher documented personal assumptions, reflections, and analytical decisions to reduce the influence of subjectivity on data interpretation.

Transferability was supported by providing thick, rich descriptions of the research context, participants, and findings, allowing readers to assess the applicability of the results to other inclusive education settings.

### ***Data presentation and analysis***

This section presents the collected data and the corresponding analyses in response to the study's research questions.

#### ***Problem 1: How do non-SPED teachers demonstrate grit in inclusive education?***

This study explored how non-special education (non-SPED) teachers demonstrate grit in inclusive classrooms. Using qualitative analysis of teacher statements, four major themes emerged: Perseverance in Teaching Practice, Instructional Adaptability and Creativity, Collaboration and Professional Support, and Student-Centered Motivation. These themes reflect multiple dimensions of grit, including persistence, flexibility, relational support, and intrinsic motivation, aligning with previous research on teacher resilience and inclusive pedagogy.

***Table 1. Demonstration of grit by non-SPED teachers in inclusive education.***

| <b>Theme</b>                              | <b>Categories</b>         | <b>Extracted Statements</b>  |
|---|---------------------------|--|
| Perseverance in teaching practice         | Persistence with learners | “I demonstrate grit by never giving up on my students, even when it’s hard, and by adjusting my teaching methods until they all learn.”                    |
|   | Sustained commitment      | “I keep my motivation by focusing on my students’ small progress and reminding myself that every effort makes a difference.”                               |
| Instructional adaptability and creativity | Differentiated teaching   | “I stay committed by preparing different activities so that every child can join and feel successful in class.”  |
|   | Flexible problem-solving  | “I show grit by being patient and creative in helping my students with different needs, always finding ways to make sure everyone understands the lesson.” |

|  |                                       |   |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| Collaboration and professional support | Teamwork and shared strategies        | “I show perseverance by staying positive and flexible, working with other teachers to make inclusive learning effective for all.”                           |
|  | Seeking mentorship and guidance       | "I often seek advice and feedback from more experienced teachers or SPED specialists to improve my strategies for including all students in the classroom." |
| Student-centered motivation            | Focusing on learner progress          | “I keep my motivation by focusing on my students’ small progress and reminding myself that every effort makes a difference.”                                |
|  | Encouraging participation and success | “I stay committed by preparing different activities so that every child can join and feel successful in class.”   |

**Source: Lived (2026)**

The analysis of participants’ narratives revealed that non-SPED teachers demonstrate grit through four major themes: Perseverance in Teaching Practice, Instructional Adaptability and Creativity, Collaboration and Professional Support, and Student-Centered Motivation.

Perseverance in teaching practice reflects teachers’ sustained commitment to engaging learners despite diverse academic and contextual challenges. Participants emphasized that their motivation was strengthened by celebrating small student achievements and continuously refining instructional strategies to meet evolving learning needs. This finding is consistent with Duckworth et al. (2007) and Lee and Park (2024), who identified persistence of effort as a core dimension of grit that predicts teachers’ long-term engagement and instructional effectiveness.

Instructional adaptability and creativity emerged as another key expression of grit. Teachers demonstrated flexibility by differentiating lessons and developing innovative learning activities to ensure that all students could actively participate and succeed. This mirrors the findings of Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) and Collado Meril (2025), who emphasized that adaptive pedagogy is essential for sustaining teacher motivation in inclusive classroom settings.

Collaboration and professional support highlighted the relational dimension of grit. Teachers relied on teamwork, shared practices, and guidance from experienced colleagues and SPED specialists to improve instructional effectiveness and sustain perseverance. Consistent with Smith and Dela Cruz (2023) and Bergado and Ventura (2025), these results demonstrate how mentorship and collegial networks serve as vital social support structures in inclusive education.

Finally, student-centered motivation underscored the intrinsic drive that fuels teachers’ grit. Participants’ strong focus on learner progress reflects the findings of Day and Gu (2014) and Santos and Dela Cruz (2025), who reported that intrinsic motivation derived from student success plays a central role in sustaining teachers’ resilience and professional commitment.

**Problem 2. What factors contribute to the development and maintenance of grit among non-SPED teachers in inclusive education?**

This study explored the factors that contribute to grit among non-SPED teachers in inclusive classrooms. Based on qualitative data, five overarching themes were identified: personal dispositional factors, supportive institutional environment, professional experience and training, social and relational support, and commitment to continuous learning and student understanding. These themes provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how teachers sustain perseverance and resilience when teaching learners with disabilities, aligning with research on teacher motivation and resilience in inclusive settings.

**Table 2. Factors contributing to the development and maintenance of grit among non-SPED teachers in inclusive education.**

| Theme   | Categories                            | Extracted Statements  |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| Personal dispositional factors                              | Emotional stability and compassion    | “My patience, compassion, and belief that every child can learn help me stay strong and determined in teaching students with disabilities.” |
|   | Growth mindset and optimism           | “Belief that every child can learn” reflects a mindset of continuous possibility and resilience.”   |
| Supportive institutional environment                        | Leadership and administrative support | “Support from my school leaders and a positive work environment encourage me to keep going even when teaching becomes challenging.”         |
|   | Positive school climate               | “A positive work environment encourages me to keep going.”  |
| Professional experience and training                        | Prior experience                      | “My past experiences and training in handling diverse learners help me build confidence and sustain my perseverance.”                       |
|   | Professional development              | “Training in handling diverse learners helps me build confidence.”  |
| Social and relational support                               | Peer support and collaboration        | “The encouragement from my co-teachers and the trust of my students motivate me to stay committed and never give up.”                       |
|   | Student–teacher relationship          | “The trust of my students motivates me to stay committed and never give up.”  |
| Commitment to continuous learning and student understanding | Reflective and adaptive practice      | “Continuous learning and understanding each student’s unique needs strengthen my grit and passion to make inclusion successful.”            |
|   | Student-centered commitment           | “Understanding each student’s unique needs strengthens my grit and passion.”  |

*Source: Lived (2026)*

Analysis of participants' responses revealed five major themes contributing to the development and maintenance of grit among non-SPED teachers in inclusive education: Personal Dispositional Factors, Supportive Institutional Environment, Professional Experience and Training, Social and Relational Support, and Commitment to Continuous Learning and Student Understanding.

Personal dispositional factors highlight the role of intrinsic qualities, such as emotional stability, compassion, a growth mindset, and optimism, in sustaining teachers' perseverance. Participants shared that their belief in every learner's capacity to succeed, combined with patience and emotional resilience, enabled them to remain motivated despite ongoing challenges. These findings are supported by Lee and Park (2024) and Purnomo et al. (2024), who reported that emotional stability, compassion, and a growth mindset significantly predict teacher perseverance.

A supportive institutional environment also emerged as a critical contributor to grit. Teachers emphasized that leadership support, a positive school climate, and encouragement from administrators provided both emotional reassurance and practical guidance, helping them navigate the complexities of inclusive education. This aligns with Ramos and Ventura (2023) and Gal (2025), who found that strong leadership and positive school culture enhance teacher resilience.

Professional experience and training strengthened teachers' confidence and preparedness to meet diverse learning needs. Participants noted that prior exposure to inclusive classrooms and targeted professional development equipped them with effective strategies and reinforced their capacity to persevere. This finding confirms the work of Pancito (2024) and Jardinez (2024), who demonstrated that focused training programs significantly enhance teachers' confidence and grit.

Social and relational support was identified as another enabling factor. Teachers drew motivation from peer collaboration, mentoring relationships, and positive connections with students, which not only sustained their persistence but also improved their professional efficacy. This is consistent with Smith and Dela Cruz (2023) and Basister et al. (2025), who highlighted the importance of collegial support in maintaining teacher commitment.

Finally, a commitment to continuous learning and student understanding reflected the dynamic and reflective dimension of grit. Participants reported that ongoing professional growth, adaptive teaching practices, and sustained focus on individual learner needs deepened their passion for teaching and strengthened their perseverance. This echoes Zhang et al. (2025), who emphasized that reflective practice and adaptive instruction are essential to sustaining grit in inclusive education.

***Problem 3. What challenges do non-SPED teachers face in sustaining grit while teaching learners with disabilities?***

This study explored the challenges non-SPED teachers face in sustaining grit while teaching learners with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. The analysis identified multiple interrelated factors that hinder teachers' perseverance, patience, and long-term commitment. These challenges span instructional,

workload-related, emotional, coping, and institutional domains, reflecting the complex demands of inclusive education and the multidimensional nature of teacher resilience.

**Table 3. Challenges faced by non-SPED teachers in sustaining grit while teaching learners with disabilities.**

| Theme   | Categories                                      | Extracted Statements  |
|---|---|---|
| Instructional and learner-related challenges        | Learning diversity and differentiation          | “It is hard to stay patient when students have different learning speeds.”  |
|   | Behavioral and cognitive differences            | “Managing a diverse class can be stressful.”<br>“Difficulty in balancing attention between students with and without disabilities.”                   |
|   | Limited training in inclusive pedagogy          | “Teachers feel underprepared to handle special needs effectively, leading to frustration and self-doubt.”   |
| Workload, time pressure, and administrative demands | Excessive workload administrative and           | “The heavy workload and limited time sometimes lower my motivation.”  |
|   | Time constraints                                | “Limited time for lesson modification, assessment, and individualized support.”   |
|   | Paperwork burden                                | “The demands of documentation and reporting reduce focus on actual teaching.”   |
| Emotional and professional fatigue                  | Emotional exhaustion                            | “Managing a diverse class can be stressful, so I take short breaks and remind myself of my purpose.”  |
|   | Decreased motivation and patience               | “Sustained exposure to high-stress situations causes emotional depletion.”  |
|   | Feelings of isolation                           | “Teachers often feel unsupported when dealing with complex classroom dynamics.”   |
| Coping and resilience mechanisms                    | Peer collaboration and support systems          | “When I feel tired, I talk to my co-teachers for support and encouragement.”  |
|   | Reflective and self-regulatory practices        | “Sharing experiences and ideas with other teachers helps me feel supported.”  |
|   | Intrinsic motivation and student-centered focus | “I focus on my students’ small achievements, which give me strength to continue.” “I take short breaks and remind myself of my purpose as a teacher.” |
| Institutional and systemic barriers                 | Lack of resources and support structures        | “Insufficient materials, lack of SPED assistance, and limited professional development opportunities.”  |
|   | Inadequate policy and leadership support        | “Lack of recognition and structured guidance from school leaders undermines teachers’ resilience and long-term perseverance.”                         |

Source: Lived (2026)

The analysis of participant responses revealed that non-SPED teachers face multiple challenges in sustaining grit while teaching learners with disabilities, grouped into five main themes: Instructional and Learner-Related Challenges, Workload and Administrative Demands, Emotional and Professional Fatigue, Coping and Resilience Mechanisms, and Institutional and Systemic Barriers.

Instructional and learner-related challenges emerged as a major concern, with teachers reporting difficulties in addressing learning diversity, behavioral and cognitive differences, and limited formal preparation in inclusive pedagogy. These conditions often led to frustration, self-doubt, and the need for ongoing instructional adjustments. This finding is consistent with Lucena-Rodríguez et al. (2025) and Sharma et al. (2018), who identified classroom diversity and insufficient training as key stressors in inclusive education.

Workload, time pressure, and administrative demands further intensified these challenges. Teachers described how heavy workloads, strict timelines, and extensive documentation requirements limited opportunities for individualized instruction and creative lesson planning. This aligns with the findings of Pancito (2024) and Ramos and Ventura (2023).

Emotional and professional fatigue was another critical issue. Sustained exposure to stressful teaching conditions and feelings of professional isolation contributed to emotional exhaustion, reduced patience, and temporary declines in motivation. This observation supports Gu and Day (2013) and Santos and Dela Cruz (2025), who linked prolonged stress to diminished teacher perseverance.

Despite these difficulties, teachers adopted coping and resilience mechanisms to sustain grit. Peer collaboration, reflective practice, and a focus on student-centered achievements were identified as key strategies for maintaining motivation in inclusive classrooms. This finding confirms the work of Beltman and Mansfield (2015) on the buffering role of collegial support.

Finally, institutional and systemic barriers—such as inadequate resources, limited SPED support, and weak leadership guidance—were identified as structural constraints that undermine teachers' ability to sustain grit over time. These results are consistent with those of Vergara et al. (2025) and Bergado and Ventura (2025).

## ***Results and discussion***

The analysis indicates that non-SPED teachers demonstrate grit in inclusive classrooms through a dynamic interplay of personal, professional, relational, instructional, and systemic factors. Teachers' personal dispositions, including emotional stability, compassion, and a growth mindset, provide intrinsic motivation and resilience, enabling persistence in the face of challenges (Duckworth et al., 2007; Gu & Day, 2013). Instructional adaptability and creativity further sustain grit, as teachers employ differentiated strategies and flexible problem-solving to meet diverse learner needs (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Collaboration and professional support, including mentorship and peer networks, reinforce perseverance by providing emotional and strategic guidance (Beltman & Mansfield, 2015), while student-centered

motivation—focusing on incremental learner progress—serves both as a driver of persistence and as positive reinforcement for teaching effort (Day & Gu, 2014; Hong, 2012).

Despite these strengths, teachers face significant challenges in sustaining grit. Instructional and learner-related complexities, workload pressures, emotional fatigue, and limited professional preparation increase stress and reduce confidence (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Gu & Day, 2013). Institutional and systemic barriers, such as insufficient resources, inadequate SPED support, and limited leadership guidance, further constrain teachers' perseverance. Teachers mitigate these challenges through coping strategies, reflective practice, peer collaboration, and intrinsic motivation focused on student outcomes, highlighting that grit is both an individual attribute and a socially mediated process.

These findings underscore that sustaining grit requires a holistic approach. Professional development should focus on adaptive pedagogy and reflective practices, schools should foster collaborative cultures and mentorship programs, and policies should ensure adequate resources and recognition of incremental student progress. Interventions that integrate personal, instructional, relational, and systemic supports are likely to strengthen teacher resilience and enhance inclusive education outcomes, aligning with prior Scopus-indexed research emphasizing the multidimensional and contextually embedded nature of teacher grit (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Duckworth et al., 2007; Gu & Day, 2013).

This study extends Duckworth et al.'s (2007) grit framework by demonstrating that teacher grit is not merely a stable personality trait but a socially constructed and context-dependent process shaped by collaboration, leadership support, and school climate. These findings suggest that teacher education institutions should integrate inclusive pedagogy and resilience-building components into preservice curricula, while school leaders should establish structured mentoring systems, reduce administrative burdens, and ensure access to SPED specialists to help sustain teacher grit.

Despite these contributions, the study is limited by its small sample of non-SPED teachers from a single school division, which restricts the generalizability of the results. In addition, reliance on self-reported interviews may have introduced social desirability bias. Future research should involve larger and more diverse samples, employ mixed-methods designs to examine causal relationships between institutional support, teacher grit, and student outcomes, and use longitudinal approaches to explore how grit develops across teachers' professional careers.

## ***Conclusion***

This study shows that non-SPED teachers demonstrate grit through perseverance, instructional adaptability, collaboration, and student-centered motivation, sustained by personal dispositions, professional training, supportive school environments, and continuous learning, yet constrained by limited preparation in inclusive pedagogy, heavy workload, emotional fatigue, and systemic barriers. The findings indicate that grit is a dynamic, socially constructed process shaped by the interaction of individual motivation and institutional conditions rather than a fixed personal trait. By situating grit within teachers' lived experiences in inclusive classrooms, the study contributes a contextualized, ecological understanding of grit that extends beyond trait-based models. It therefore recommends

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reconceptualizing grit frameworks to integrate relational collaboration, school climate, and leadership support, and urges teacher education institutions, school leaders, and policymakers to strengthen inclusive pedagogy training, mentorship systems, professional development, workload management, and access to SPED resources to sustain teacher perseverance and improve inclusive education outcomes.

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