



Exploring the experiences of parents and strategies in managing behavioral challenges of learners with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and barriers

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ABSTRACT

Parenting a child with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) presents unique challenges, particularly in managing behavioral difficulties that affect learning, social interactions, and family functioning. This study explored the lived experiences of selected parents of learners with ASD in the Municipality of Flora, Province of Apayao, focusing on the strategies employed and the barriers encountered in behavior management. Using a qualitative phenomenological design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed via Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic framework. Results showed that learners with ASD commonly experience communication difficulties, emotional dysregulation, sensory sensitivities, and behavioral rigidity. Parents implemented structured routines, professional guidance, reinforcement techniques, and ongoing adaptation, yet challenges persisted, including maintaining consistency, managing sensory-triggered behaviors, and coping with stress. Despite these difficulties, parents exhibited resilience, patience, and commitment to their children's development. Findings highlight the need for accessible parent training, strengthened school-home collaboration, and community-based support, and recommend that policymakers, educators, and practitioners develop context-sensitive, parent-centered programs to enhance caregiver capacity and improve behavioral outcomes for learners with ASD, particularly in rural settings.

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Introduction

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a lifelong neurodevelopmental condition characterized by persistent difficulties in social communication, reciprocal interaction, and behavioral regulation. Learners with ASD commonly demonstrate challenges such as language delays, restricted and repetitive behaviors, heightened sensitivity to sensory stimuli, and difficulties with emotional regulation, all of which

influence adaptive functioning, academic engagement, and participation in daily activities at home and in school (Battanta et al., 2024; Nowell et al., 2019). These behavioral characteristics highlight the need for individualized support, structured routines, and consistent behavioral guidance. Understanding behavioral challenges experienced by learners with ASD is, therefore, critical, as these difficulties form the foundation of parental caregiving strategies.

Parents play a pivotal role in managing behavioral challenges and reinforcing learning routines beyond formal educational settings. Research consistently indicates that parents employ structured routines, visual supports, reinforcement systems, and individualized strategies to address maladaptive behaviors and support emotional regulation (Nowell et al., 2019). Parent-implemented interventions, including behavior skills training and coaching, have been shown to reduce disruptive behaviors in children with ASD while improving parental competence and reducing caregiver stress (Ingersoll & Dvortcsak, 2019); Teaching Parents Behavioral Strategies for Autism Spectrum

Disorder (2018). Parent training delivered via telehealth or hybrid models also shows promise for expanding access to behavior-management skills, particularly where professional services are scarce (Lindgren et al., 2020; Psychological Interventions through Remote Behavioral Skills Training Program, 2023). These findings affirm that parent-mediated approaches grounded in evidence-based behavioral principles can enhance both child outcomes and parental self-efficacy.

However, parents' strategies are influenced by multiple contextual factors, such as parental knowledge, access to professional support, family resources, and cultural expectations. Parenting a child with ASD is frequently associated with elevated stress, which can undermine strategy implementation without adequate support (Battanta et al., 2024; Nihed et al., 2024). Despite these insights, most research originates from high-resource or urban contexts, leaving gaps in understanding parental experiences in rural or resource-constrained settings, such as many communities in the Philippines.

In the Philippine context, parents often assume primary responsibility for behavior management due to limited access to specialized diagnostic, therapeutic, and educational services. Rural parents face additional challenges, including financial burdens, heightened stress, and restricted access to autism-related programs, which can hinder consistent application of behavior-management strategies. Although national policies such as Republic Act No. 11650 and Department of Education Order No. 21, s. In 2019, to promote inclusive education and recognize parents as key partners, their implementation outside urban centers remains uneven. Consequently, examining parents' lived experiences in rural settings can generate context-sensitive insights to inform caregiver training programs, support school-home collaboration, and guide policy initiatives. This study, therefore, explored the behavioral challenges faced by learners with ASD, the strategies employed by parents to manage these behaviors, and the barriers to implementing these strategies, particularly in rural Philippine communities.

Literature review

This chapter presents a synthesis of related literature and studies that provide theoretical and empirical support for the present research. It discusses behavioral challenges among learners with autism spectrum

Behavioral challenges of learners with autism spectrum disorder

Autism Spectrum Disorder is a neurodevelopmental condition marked by persistent difficulties in social communication and restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2022). These characteristics significantly influence learners' adaptive functioning, engagement in school, and participation in daily activities.

Parents commonly report behavioral challenges, including noncompliance, tantrums, emotional outbursts, sensory sensitivities, and difficulties with transitions. For example, studies examining everyday parenting strategies show that parents often adjust their environments and routines to manage problem behaviors specific to ASD, which are triggered by communication breakdowns, sensory overload, and rigidity in routines (Battanta et al., 2024; Parent Training Strategies for ASD, 2018). These challenges extend beyond educational contexts into home settings, where behavioral escalation often precedes emotional distress and functional limitations.

Parental strategies in managing behavioral challenges

Parental involvement is central to addressing behavioral difficulties among learners with ASD. Research indicates that parents use structured environments, consistent routines, and individualized behavior-management strategies to support their children (Battanta et al., 2024). Empirical evidence from randomized clinical trials and systematic reviews suggests that structured parent training programs that teach behavior management techniques can reduce disruptive behaviors and improve parental competence and stress outcomes. In a notable randomized trial, parent training reduced child irritability and noncompliance more effectively than parent education alone, improved parental sense of competence, and reduced caregiver strain (Parent Training vs Psychoeducation, 2018; Teaching Parents Behavioral Strategies, 2018; Psychological Interventions via Telehealth, 2023).

Systematic reviews also support the effectiveness of parent training for reducing child behavior problems and improving parent outcomes, although heterogeneity in program content, delivery, and outcome measures suggests the need for consensus on best practices (BMC Psychiatry Review, 2020; Meta-analysis of Parent Training, 2020).

Support systems and collaborative interventions

Effective behavior management often involves collaboration among parents, teachers, therapists, and community stakeholders. Parents from low-resourced communities report several service access barriers, such as limited knowledge about ASD, a lack of professional supports, and few peer networks, which constrain their ability to implement consistent strategies (Exploring Barriers in Low-Resourced Communities, 2023). These findings underscore the importance of integrated support systems, culturally responsive parent training, and enhanced access to professional services, particularly in rural or underserved contexts, such as those in the Philippines.

Collectively, the reviewed literature indicates that both individual child factors and broader contextual conditions shape parental experiences and strategies in managing behavioral challenges. These insights highlight the need for family-centered and community-integrated interventions that build parental capacity while addressing systemic barriers to service access.

Statement of the problem

This study explored parents' experiences in managing the behavioral challenges of learners with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in the Municipality of Flora, Province of Apayao. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What behavioral challenges are commonly experienced by learners with ASD as reported by parents?
2. What strategies do parents use to manage these behavioral challenges?
3. What barriers do parents encounter in implementing these strategies?

Methodology

This chapter presented the research design, sources of data, including the study locale, population, and sampling; data-gathering instrument; and data analysis, including its ethical standards.

Locale of the study

The study is conducted in the Municipality of Flora, Province of Apayao. This locale was selected to represent a provincial/rural setting in which access to specialized neurodevelopmental facilities and professional therapists may be limited, thereby placing a unique burden of care on parents.

Population and sampling

The study employed purposive sampling to select participants who met specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. Ten parents of learners diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) were included in the study. To be eligible, participants had to be the child's primary caregiver, have a child with a formal or recognized diagnosis of ASD, and reside in Flora, Apayao. A total of 10 participants were selected to ensure data saturation, the point at which no new themes or information emerged from additional interviews.

Data gathering instrument

The primary instrument used in the study was a semi-structured interview guide that enabled flexible, conversational interactions with participants. This format enabled the researcher to ask follow-up questions or probes based on the parents' responses, facilitating richer and more detailed data collection. The guide was organized into three sections aligned with the research questions: observed behavioral challenges, such as meltdowns and sensory issues; management strategies employed by parents, including routines and reinforcement techniques; and barriers encountered in managing these behaviors, such as limited resources and personal stress.

Data gathering procedure

Data collection was initiated after securing administrative clearance from the Graduate School and obtaining permission from Flora East Center School, which serves learners with Special Needs Education. Potential participants were identified through the school and the students' medical certificates. The study's purpose, procedures, and ethical considerations were explained to each participant, and written informed consent was obtained before participation. One-on-one interviews were conducted in quiet, comfortable settings or via video call when in-person meetings were not feasible. With participants' permission, interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accurate transcription and subsequent analysis. This approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of parents' experiences in managing behavioral challenges among learners with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Data analysis tool

The study employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) Six-Phase Thematic Analysis Framework to analyze the qualitative data. The process began with familiarization, which involved reading and re-reading the interview transcripts to gain a thorough understanding of the content. This was followed by coding, where key phrases related to learners' behavioral challenges, parental strategies, and barriers were systematically labeled. Codes were then organized into broader patterns to generate themes, which were subsequently reviewed to ensure they accurately represented the raw data. Clear, descriptive titles were assigned to each major theme during the defining and naming phase. Finally, the themes were integrated into the research report, allowing the findings to be presented coherently and meaningfully.

Ethical considerations

Ethical principles were strictly observed in conducting this qualitative study. Before data collection, informed consent was obtained after clearly explaining the purpose of the study, the interview procedures, and the participants' right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by using pseudonyms to protect participants' and their children's identities. In keeping with the principle of beneficence, interviews were conducted in a respectful, nonjudgmental, and supportive manner to minimize any potential emotional discomfort. All audio recordings and transcribed data were securely stored and accessed only by the researcher. All data will be appropriately disposed of upon completion of the study in accordance with Graduate School research ethics guidelines.

Presentation and analysis of results

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

Problem 1: What behavioral challenges are commonly experienced by learners with autism as reported by parents?

The narratives of participating parents were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework. Four major themes emerged that capture the core behavioral challenges experienced by learners with autism spectrum disorder (ASD): (1) Communication and Expression Difficulties, (2) Emotional Dysregulation and Tantrums, (3) Sensory Sensitivities, and (4) Social and Behavioral Rigidity. These themes reflect the interconnected nature of communication, emotional

Table 1: Experiences dealing with ASD.

Themes	Categories	Representative Statements
Communication and expression difficulties	Difficulty expressing needs	“My child struggles to communicate his needs clearly, which often leads to frustration.” (Parent 1)
	Limited expressive and receptive language	“He does not easily understand instructions, especially when they are given verbally.” (Parent 3)
	Limited use of non-verbal communication	“My child usually uses gestures or pointing instead of words to express what he wants.” (Parent 5)
	Echolalia	“He repeats words or phrases and becomes anxious when his routine changes.” (Parent 6)
	Difficulty interpreting social cues	“He becomes aggressive or cries when he cannot express himself properly.” (Parent 7)
Emotional dysregulation and tantrums	Meltdowns	“My child experiences frequent meltdowns, especially when things do not go as expected.” (Parent 2)
	Low frustration tolerance	“He hits or throws things when he is denied something he wants.” (Parent 4)
	Difficulty with transitions	“He has tantrums whenever there are sudden changes in his routine.” (Parent 6)
	Difficulty self-soothing	“It takes him a long time to calm down once he becomes upset.” (Parent 8)
Sensory sensitivities	Auditory sensitivity	“My child cries and covers his ears when he hears loud sounds.” (Parent 1)
	Sensitivity to crowded environments	“He avoids crowded places such as markets or school programs because they overwhelm him.” (Parent 3)

	Sensory overload	“He has difficulty communicating and regulating his behavior during sensory activities.” (Parent 5)
Social and behavioral rigidity	Resistance to change	“My child wants to follow the same routine every day and becomes anxious when it changes.” (Parent 2)
	Hyperactivity	“He is very hyperactive and unable to stay still for long periods.” (Parent 4)
	Repetitive behaviors	“He keeps repeating the same movements, especially when he is excited or stressed.” (Parent 6)
	Difficulty engaging in new activities	“He refuses to try new tasks or games even when encouraged.” (Parent 7)

Source: Bagaoisan (2026)

The findings indicate that communication and expression difficulties are the most prominent behavioral challenges among learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), aligning with the American Psychiatric Association (2022). Deficits in expressive and receptive language limit children’s ability to communicate needs and follow instructions, often increasing frustration and maladaptive behaviors (Lord et al., 2018), leading many to rely on non-verbal strategies. Communication impairments are thus primary antecedents of behavioral difficulties (Tager-Flusberg & Kasari, 2016).

Parents also reported emotional dysregulation and tantrums, particularly during transitions or routine disruptions, reflecting self-regulatory deficits common in ASD (Demetriou et al., 2018). Emotional dysregulation predicts problem behaviors and mediates the impact of sensory differences (Sung et al., 2022). Sensory sensitivities, including heightened reactivity to auditory stimuli and crowded environments, contribute to emotional distress and behavioral outbursts, often interacting with communication challenges (Ben-Sasson et al., 2019; Khaledi et al., 2022).

Behavioral rigidity, manifested as insistence on sameness and repetitive behaviors, is also prevalent. These restricted and repetitive behaviors are associated with anxiety and emotional dysregulation, particularly when routines are disrupted (Uljarević et al., 2017).

Collectively, these behavioral challenges are multidimensional and interrelated, affecting adaptive functioning (Sung et al., 2022; Khaledi et al., 2022). Findings underscore the need for context-sensitive, family-centered interventions in inclusive educational settings. Evidence shows that multicomponent strategies integrating communication supports, emotional regulation, and environmental accommodations improve behavioral and adaptive outcomes (Fuller & Kaiser, 2020). Enhancing teacher competencies, providing structured parent training, and strengthening community supports are critical, especially in resource-limited contexts (Lai et al., 2020).

Parents' accounts revealed a range of strategies to support learners' emotional regulation, communication, and adaptive behavior. Through thematic analysis, four major coping and management themes emerged: (1) Professional Guidance, (2) Consistent Routines, (3) Calming and Reinforcement Techniques, and (4) Parental Learning and Adaptation.

Table 2: Strategies in managing behavioral challenges

Themes	Categories	Representative Statements
Professional guidance	Therapist support	"His occupational therapist introduced me to effective strategies to manage his behavior." (Parent 2)
	Teacher guidance	"The teacher guided me on how to handle his behavior both at school and at home." (Parent 4)
	Parent coaching	"The therapy center provided advice that helped me understand my child better." (Parent 6)
Consistent routines	Visual schedules	"I use visual schedules and picture cards to help him understand his daily routine." (Parent 3)
	Predictable structure	"Maintaining a consistent daily routine helps reduce his anxiety." (Parent 5)
	Task breakdown	"Breaking tasks into small steps makes it easier for him to follow instructions." (Parent 7)
Calming and reinforcement techniques	Calm-down strategies	"I use calming techniques like soft music to help him relax." (Parent 1)
	Reward systems	"We use reward charts to encourage positive behavior." (Parent 4)
	Positive reinforcement	"I praise him whenever he follows instructions or behaves well." (Parent 6)

Parental learning and adaptation	Online learning	“I learned helpful strategies by attending webinars for parents of children with autism.” (Parent 8)
	Observation and experience	“Through observation and experience at home, I learned what strategies work best.” (Parent 3)
	Peer support	“I learned useful tips by talking to other parents who have children with autism.” (Parent 5)
	Strategy adjustment	“We adjust our strategies based on what works best for our family.” (Parent 7)

Source: Bagaoisan (2026)

Parents adopt a combination of structured, emotion-focused, and problem-focused strategies to manage behavioral challenges in learners with ASD. Evidence shows that parent-mediated interventions—such as prompting, engagement techniques, and behavior support—enhance both parent efficacy and children’s participation in daily routines (Ibañez et al., 2018). Professional guidance from teachers and therapists is critical, supporting consistent implementation across home and school and emphasizing coordinated parent–teacher partnerships (Garbacz et al., 2015).

Consistent routines and structured visual schedules provide predictability, reduce anxiety, support transitions, and increase independence, aligning with evidence-based practices that improve engagement and on-task behavior (Liang, Lee, Zuo, & Liang, 2024). Task segmentation, clear instructions, and visual cues further facilitate behavioral regulation and reduce reliance on verbal prompts.

Calming and reinforcement techniques complement routine-based strategies by promoting emotional regulation and positive behavior. Parents use quiet spaces, sensory activities, reward systems, and verbal praise, reflecting principles of family-centered positive behavior support, which reduce challenging behaviors and enhance adaptive functioning (Hendrix, Pickard, Binion, & Kushner, 2022).

Parental learning and adaptation highlight their active role as lifelong learners. Through observation, online resources, peer support, and trial and error, parents refine strategies to meet evolving needs. Higher parental self-efficacy and social support are associated with improved family quality of life and positive outcomes, fostering resilience and agency, particularly when formal services are limited (Dai, Chen, & Deng, 2023).

Problem 3: What barriers do parents encounter in implementing these strategies?

Despite employing multiple strategies, parents reported several barriers that hinder consistent implementation. Four major themes emerged: (1) Difficulty Maintaining Consistency, (2) Ineffective Discipline, (3) Sensory and Emotional Challenges, and (4) Parental Stress and Adaptation.

Table 3: Barriers

Themes	Categories	Representative Statements
Difficulty maintaining consistency	Competing responsibilities	“Sometimes I get distracted by household responsibilities and forget to follow routines.” (Parent 2)
	Limited patience	“At first, it was difficult for me to remain consistent and patient.” (Parent 4)
Ineffective discipline	Punitive strategies	“Time-outs did not work and only made my child more upset.” (Parent 6)
	Verbal reprimands	“Scolding and verbal warnings often confused my child.” (Parent 7)
Sensory and emotional challenges	Overstimulation	“Crowded classrooms make my child anxious and overstimulated.” (Parent 1)
	Difficulty identifying triggers	“I cannot always tell what triggers my child’s emotional outbursts.” (Parent 3)
Parental stress and adaptation	Emotional fatigue	“At first, I felt very frustrated, but over time I became more confident.” (Parent 5)
	Self-doubt	“I often questioned whether I was doing the right thing as a parent.” (Parent 6)
	Need for support	“Talking to other parents and therapists helped me cope with the challenges.” (Parent 8)

Source: Bagaoisan (2026)

The findings demonstrate that parents face interrelated emotional, practical, and contextual barriers in managing their children’s behavior. Difficulty maintaining consistency often stemmed from competing household responsibilities and emotional fatigue, limiting sustained implementation of structured strategies. Research shows that parenting stress and challenges related to managing behavioral problems are significantly higher in families of children with ASD compared to those of typically developing peers, and greater stress is associated with increased caregiving demands and elevated behavioral

difficulties, which can impede parents' ability to implement consistent behavior management practices (Strauss et al., 2022). Additionally, negative or coercive parenting practices (e.g., hostile or harsh disciplinary approaches) have been associated with higher levels of externalizing behavior in children with ASD, illustrating the limited usefulness of punitive methods and the risks they pose for exacerbating behavioral problems in this population (Liu et al., 2023).

Sensory and emotional challenges further complicated behavior management, as parents struggled to anticipate triggers and regulate overstimulation, contributing to heightened parental stress and self-doubt, particularly during the early stages of caregiving. Empirical evidence highlights that children with ASD frequently experience co-occurring sensory regulation difficulties and emotional dysregulation, which are strongly associated with elevated parenting stress and amplified caregiving demands (Zhou et al., 2022). Over time, however, parents reported increased confidence through experience, learning, and social support, with adaptive coping and parental self-efficacy playing protective roles in moderating stress related to child behavior challenges, supporting parents in refining strategies and improving emotional regulation for both children and themselves.

Overall, the findings illustrate that managing behavioral challenges in ASD is an emotionally demanding yet adaptive process, shaped by parental resilience, learning, and collaboration. Strengthening parent education, improving access to professional guidance, and enhancing community-based support systems are essential for enabling parents to sustain effective strategies and promote positive outcomes for learners with ASD. Parents themselves have identified persistent unmet needs for coordinated services, early interventions, specialized training, and psychosocial support, with higher parental resilience and access to social support correlated with lower stress and greater parenting self-efficacy — factors that enhance parents' capacity to adapt and sustain effective behavior management practices (Büyük & Özmen, 2025).

Discussion of Findings

This study examined the behavioral challenges experienced by learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as perceived by their parents, alongside the strategies employed to manage these challenges. Through thematic analysis, four interrelated behavioral domains emerged: communication and expression difficulties, emotional dysregulation and tantrums, sensory sensitivities, and social-behavioral rigidity. These findings highlight the multidimensional and interconnected nature of behavioral challenges in ASD, demonstrating how communication impairments, difficulties in emotional regulation, and environmental demands collectively influence learners' daily functioning at home and in school (American Psychiatric Association, 2022; Lord et al., 2020).

Communication and expression difficulties were the most prominent concern. Parents reported limited expressive and receptive language, difficulty understanding verbal instructions, reliance on nonverbal communication, and echolalia, often resulting in frustration, withdrawal, or behavioral escalation. These findings align with literature identifying communication impairments as a primary antecedent of challenging behaviors when children cannot effectively convey needs or comprehend instructions (Tager-Flusberg & Kasari, 2016). Parents' adaptive strategies—including gestures, visual schedules, and

task segmentation—reflect evidence-based supports for learners with ASD. Within the Philippine educational context, where instruction is predominantly verbal and classrooms are often overcrowded, these communication barriers may further limit participation in inclusive learning environments, highlighting the need for DepEd SPED-aligned accommodations (DepEd Order No. 72, s. 2009).

Emotional dysregulation—including tantrums, irritability, and difficulty with self-soothing—emerged as a major contributor to broader behavioral challenges among learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Parents reported frequent meltdowns and low frustration tolerance, particularly during transitions and disruptions of established routines. Empirical evidence indicates that deficits in emotion regulation are strongly associated with more severe social communication impairments, increased restrictive and repetitive behaviors, and reduced adaptive functioning (Mazefsky et al., 2018; Hyman et al., 2020). These findings reinforce the importance of predictable routines, structured environments, and individualized behavior-support strategies to mitigate emotional escalation and support adaptive functioning in both home and school contexts.

Sensory sensitivities, particularly hypersensitivity to environmental stimuli such as noise, crowds, and visual overstimulation, were also identified as significant triggers for emotional and behavioral outbursts. Recent systematic reviews and meta-analyses confirm that atypical sensory processing is significantly associated with both internalizing difficulties (e.g., anxiety and emotional distress) and externalizing behaviors (e.g., aggression and tantrums), underscoring the central role of sensory reactivity in behavioral dysregulation among learners with ASD (Ben-Sasson et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2024). Parents emphasized that sensory overload in school and community environments often precipitates behavioral escalation, highlighting the need for sensory-responsive and inclusive learning environments that are consistent with national inclusive education policies (Department of Education [DepEd], 2021).

Social and behavioral rigidity, manifesting as insistence on sameness, repetitive behaviors, hyperactivity, and reluctance to engage in new activities, interacted with communication and emotional challenges to constrain daily functioning. Recent empirical studies demonstrate that higher levels of restricted and repetitive behaviors, particularly rigidity and insistence on sameness, are significantly associated with heightened anxiety, behavioral outbursts, and poorer adaptive functioning (Lin et al., 2023; Rodgers et al., 2019). These characteristics increase caregiving demands and complicate daily routines at home and in school, particularly in contexts with limited professional support.

Parents employed multiple strategies to manage these challenges, including environmental modifications, consistent routines, visual supports, positive reinforcement, and collaboration with teachers and therapists. Such partnerships were critical for ensuring consistent implementation across home and school contexts, reflecting the importance of parent–professional collaboration in inclusive education (Brookman-Frazee et al., 2019; Li et al., 2024). These strategies were effective in reducing anxiety, promoting adaptive behaviors, and enhancing parental confidence.

Despite these efforts, parents encountered persistent barriers, including competing responsibilities, emotional exhaustion, sensory overstimulation, and reliance on punitive strategies, which were often ineffective and sometimes exacerbated behavioral escalation (Hyman et al., 2020). Over time,

experiential learning, adaptation, and access to social support enhanced parental resilience, illustrating behavioral management as a dynamic and evolving process. These findings have important implications for educational practice, parental support, and policy. Educators should implement differentiated instruction, structured routines, and evidence-based communication supports, while policies must operationalize DepEd SPED guidelines through professional development, resource provision, and monitoring. Overall, the interconnected and dynamic nature of behavioral challenges highlights the need for culturally responsive interventions and longitudinal research to inform sustainable support systems for learners with ASD (Rance, 2025).

Conclusion

Parents of learners with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) navigate multifaceted behavioral challenges encompassing communication deficits, emotional dysregulation, sensory sensitivities, and behavioral rigidity, implementing structured routines, visual supports, calming techniques, and professional guidance while adapting strategies through experience and social support. These findings highlight the dynamic interplay between child characteristics, family resources, school environments, and community contexts, illustrating how ecological and stress-and-coping processes shape parental adaptation. The study contributes to the body of knowledge by providing context-sensitive insights into parental strategies in resource-limited, rural Philippine settings, reinforcing the importance of inclusive, family-centered approaches. Practically, results support DepEd-aligned interventions such as parent training programs, structured classroom supports, multisensory accommodations, and coordinated home–school strategies, and underscore the need to strengthen rural support systems to ensure equitable access, promote functional behavior, and operationalize policy goals of parental partnership and learner-centered instruction.

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