

Original Article

Managing Disruptive Behaviors Among Learners with Autism: A Qualitative Descriptive Study of Kindergarten Teachers

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Abstract

Classroom disruptions among learners with autism remain a challenge in kindergarten education. This study explored the experiences and adaptive practices of kindergarten teachers in managing these behavioral challenges. Using a qualitative descriptive design, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight kindergarten teachers in the selected kindergarten schools within the Division of Davao Del Norte and were selected through purposive sampling and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. The results showed that structured and responsive classroom management was characterized by establishing predictable classroom routines, responding to sudden emotional meltdowns, handling resistance during classroom transitions, simplifying instructions for task engagement, and modifying activities according to attention span. The findings on sensory and environmental adaptations for behavioral regulation revealed sensory-based learning activities and monitoring environmental stimuli affecting behavior. Fostering inclusive social participation and emotional safety was reflected in creating safe and inclusive learning spaces and regulating peer interaction during disruptions. The study concluded that effective behavior management requires flexible, individualized, and inclusive teaching practices. It is recommended that schools strengthen teacher training, behavioral support systems, and school-family collaboration in inclusive classrooms.

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1. Introduction

The increasing number of kindergarten learners with autism exhibiting disruptive behavior has become a growing concern in inclusive early childhood education worldwide (Fitri et al., 2025). Disruptive behaviors continue to challenge classroom management among kindergarten teachers handling learners with autism (Sabornie et al., 2022).

The problem of disruptive behavior among kindergarten learners with autism has also been documented in different countries. In Indonesia, teachers reported aggression and tantrums among autistic learners as persistent classroom concerns (Nurhidaya & Purwanta, 2025). In Israel, educators highlighted increasing classroom disruptions associated with autistic learners in inclusive settings (Majadley, 2025). Similarly, teachers in Israel observed behavioral and emotional regulation difficulties among learners with autism that affected classroom participation (Hastings et al., 2021).

In the Philippines, kindergarten teachers handling learners with autism likewise experience challenges related to disruptive classroom behavior in inclusive settings. Filipino teachers reported difficulties in managing behaviors such as emotional outbursts, inattentiveness, and noncompliance among learners with autism during classroom instruction (Deloria et al., 2024).

The issue remains evident in kindergarten classrooms where teachers are expected to address the behavioral needs of learners with autism while sustaining inclusive learning environments. If disruptive behavior among kindergarten learners with autism persists, it may continue to affect classroom management, learner participation, and the effectiveness of inclusive education practices. Persistent behavioral challenges may also increase teachers' difficulty in maintaining productive and supportive classroom environments for young learners. Hence, there is an urgent need to strengthen responsive classroom management practices for kindergarten teachers handling learners with autism in inclusive settings.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

The researchers employed a qualitative descriptive research design, which focuses on providing a comprehensive and straightforward description of participants' experiences, perceptions, and events as they naturally occur. According to Sandelowski (2000), qualitative descriptive research aims to present an accurate and rich summary of a phenomenon using participants' own accounts while remaining

close to the original data. This design was appropriate for the present study because it allowed the researchers to explore and describe the classroom experiences and adaptive practices of receiving teachers in supporting learners with disruptive behavior in inclusive settings. Moreover, this design offered the advantage of generating practical, detailed, and contextually grounded descriptions that supported a clearer understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

2.2. Sample and Sampling

The participants of the study consisted of eight kindergarten teachers handling learners with autism in inclusive classroom settings specifically in the selected kindergarten schools within the Division of Davao Del Norte (Table 1). These teachers were selected because they had direct experiences in managing the behavioral, instructional, and social needs of kindergarten learners with autism within mainstream classrooms. The participants varied in teaching experience, classroom exposure, and involvement in inclusive education practices, allowing the study to gather diverse perspectives regarding the challenges encountered in handling learners with autism. The participants were selected through purposive sampling, this sampling technique was utilized because this approach enabled the researchers to intentionally identify individuals who possessed experiences and characteristics relevant to the phenomenon being explored (Campbell et al., 2020).

2.3. Data Gathering Techniques

The study utilized semi-structured interviews as the primary data gathering technique to explore the experiences, challenges, and adaptive practices of kindergarten teachers handling learners with autism in mainstream classrooms. Semi-structured interviews were considered appropriate because they allowed the researchers to use guided open-ended questions while providing participants the flexibility to elaborate on their experiences and share context-specific insights (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Each interview was last approximately 30–45 minutes, providing sufficient time for participants to discuss their experiences in depth while ensuring that the interview remained focused and manageable. Through this method, participants were able to provide reflective and authentic narratives regarding classroom management, behavioral concerns, instructional adjustments, and inclusive teaching practices. The use of semi-structured interviews also enabled the researchers to probe emerging responses, clarify significant experiences, and obtain rich, in-depth descriptions of the phenomenon within the context of inclusive kindergarten education.

Table 1. Demographic profile of the kindergarten teachers.

Participant	Age	Sex	Years of Teaching Experience	Years Handling Learners with Autism	SPED Training Attended	Severity of Autism of Learner Handled	School Type
Teacher 1	29	Female	5 years	2 years	Basic Training on Inclusive Education and Classroom Accommodations	Mild Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	Public Elementary School
Teacher 2	34	Female	10 years	5 years	Inclusive Education Training, SPED Strategies Workshop, Behavior Management Seminar	Moderate ASD	Public Elementary School
Teacher 3	27	Female	4 years	1 year	Basic Orientation on Inclusive Education	Mild ASD	Public Elementary School
Teacher 4	41	Female	18 years	8 years	Multiple SPED Trainings, Autism Intervention Workshop, Positive Behavior Support Training	Moderate ASD	Public Elementary School
Teacher 5	31	Female	7 years	3 years	SPED Awareness Training and Inclusive Classroom Management Seminar	Mild ASD	Public Elementary School
Teacher 6	45	Female	20 years	10 years	Extensive SPED Professional Development, Autism Support Training, Differentiated Instruction Workshop	Severe ASD	Public Elementary School
Teacher 7	30	Female	6 years	2 years	Inclusive Education and Learner Support Training	Moderate ASD	Public Elementary School
Teacher 8	38	Female	14 years	6 years	SPED Training, Autism Spectrum Disorder Management Seminar, Individualized Education Planning Workshop	Severe ASD	Public Elementary School

2.4. Data Analysis

The study employed the thematic analysis framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2022) to systematically analyze the participants' responses. The analysis followed six recursive phases, namely familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. The researchers carefully examined recurring patterns and meaningful statements related to the experiences of kindergarten teachers handling learners with autism. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the analysis through reflective note-taking and continuous examination of possible researcher assumptions and biases. The themes were refined to ensure that they accurately represented the shared experiences and perspectives of the participants.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

The researchers observed strict ethical standards throughout the conduct of the study to protect the rights, dignity, and welfare of all participants. Informed consent was secured by clearly explaining the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, the voluntary nature of participation, and the participants' right to withdraw at any stage of the research process. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained through secure handling of the collected data and the removal of identifying information from the transcripts and research records. The researchers also ensured that the interviews were conducted respectfully and sensitively to minimize discomfort among participants while discussing their experiences in handling learners with autism. Furthermore, all research procedures complied with the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 and institutional ethical guidelines to ensure the integrity and credibility of the study.

3. Results

3.1 Structured and Responsive Classroom Management

3.1.1 Establishing Predictable Classroom Routines

Participants highlighted the importance of creating consistent schedules, clear procedures, and familiar classroom practices to support learners with disruptive behavior. Through structured daily routines and repeated instructional patterns, learners developed a clearer understanding of expectations, experienced greater emotional security, and demonstrated improved self-regulation and participation during classroom activities.

“Importante gyud nga naay klaro nga routine kada adlaw kay mas kalma ang bata kung kabalo siya unsay sunod mahitabo. Kada buntag amo gyud sundon ang parehas nga schedule sama sa prayer, attendance, ug activity time. Kung nausab kalit ang routine, usahay masuko dayon siya o dili motuo. Mao nang pirmi nako siyang pahibaloon daan kung naay changes sa among klase. Nakatabang gyud ang visual schedule kay mas dali niya masabtan ang flow sa adlaw.” “It is very important to have a clear daily routine because the learner becomes calmer when they know what will happen next. Every morning, we consistently follow the same schedule such as prayer, attendance, and activity time. When the routine suddenly changes, there are times when the learner becomes upset or refuses to cooperate. That is why I always inform the learner in advance whenever there are changes in our class. The visual schedule has

been very helpful because it allows the learner to understand the flow of the day more easily.” Participant 1

3.1.2 Responding to Sudden Emotional Meltdowns

Participants described the importance of providing immediate, calm, and supportive responses when learners experienced sudden emotional distress in the classroom. Through patient communication, emotional reassurance, behavioral guidance, and the use of calming strategies, learners were gradually helped to regain emotional control, feel safe within the learning environment, and reengage in classroom activities with greater stability and confidence.

“Naay times nga kalit lang siya mohilak ug mosyagit bisan gamay ra nga problema. Kung mahitabo ni, dili nako siya dayon kasab-an kay mas mosamot iyang emotional reaction. Ginaistorya nako siya sa hinay nga tingog ug ginapalayo sa saba nga area. Usahay magkinahanglan gyud siya ug time para mokalma balik. Importante nga calm pud ang teacher during meltdown situations.” “There are times when the learner suddenly cries and screams even over a small problem. When this happens, I do not scold the learner right away because it may intensify the emotional reaction. I talk to the learner in a gentle voice and move them away from noisy areas. Sometimes, the learner really needs time to calm down again. It is important for the teacher to remain calm during meltdown situations.” Participant 4

“Usahay ang iyang meltdown mahitabo kung daghan kaayo siyag sensory stimulation. Kung saba ang classroom o daghan og lihok, dali siya ma-overwhelm. Makita gyud nimo nga lisod para niya i-control iyang emotions. Mao nga ginahatagan nako siyag quiet corner diin siya pwede mokalma. Human pila ka minutes, mas okay na siya makabalik sa activity.” “There are times when the learner experiences a meltdown because of too much sensory stimulation. When the classroom is noisy or there is too much movement, the learner easily becomes overwhelmed. You can really see that it is difficult for them to control their emotions. That is why I provide a quiet corner where the learner can calm down. After a few minutes, the learner is usually able to return to the activity in a better state.” Participant 8

3.1.3 Handling Resistance During Classroom Transitions

Participants described the challenges of guiding learners with disruptive behavior as they moved from one classroom activity to another, particularly when transitioning from preferred or highly engaging tasks. To reduce resistance, emotional distress, and disruptive reactions, participants intentionally used preparatory strategies such as countdowns, verbal explanations, visual cards, songs, transition cues, calm communication, and step-by-step guidance. Participants further observed that when learners were informed and emotionally prepared before transitions occurred, they became more cooperative, accepted changes more readily, and were able to engage more smoothly in succeeding classroom activities.

“Lisod usahay ipabalhin siya gikan sa playtime ngadto sa written activity. Kung dili siya ready, magpugong gyud siya ug dili motindog. Mao nga maghatag ko daan ug countdown aron makaprepay siya mentally. Gigamit pud nako ang songs ug transition cues para smooth ang pagbalhin sa activities. Nabantayan nako nga mas cooperative siya ana nga strategy.”
“There are times when it is difficult to move the learner from playtime to written activities. If the learner is not ready, they really resist and refuse to stand up. That is why I give a countdown in advance so the learner can prepare mentally. I also use songs and transition cues to make the shift between activities smoother. I noticed that the learner becomes more cooperative with this strategy.” Participant 1

“Kada transition period, possible gyud nga magtantrums siya labi na kung nalingaw pa siya sa previous activity. Dili pwede nga kaliton siya kay mosamot iyang resistance. Gina-approach nako siya calmly ug ginahatagan ug simple instructions usa-usa. Usahay magkinahanglan pud ug extra assistance para mapadayon siya sa next task. Patience gyud ang pinakaimportante.”
“During every transition period, there is always a possibility that the learner may have a tantrum, especially if they are still enjoying the previous activity. You cannot suddenly interrupt them because it only increases their resistance. I approach the learner calmly and give simple instructions one at a time. Sometimes, extra assistance is also needed to help the learner continue to the next task. Patience is truly the most important thing.” Participant 7

3.1.4 Simplifying Instructions for Task Engagement

Participants demonstrated the practice of breaking down complex directions into clear, manageable, and sequential steps to support learners with disruptive behavior during classroom tasks. By using concise language, repeated guidance, and developmentally appropriate explanations, learners were able to better understand expectations, follow instructions with greater confidence, and engage more consistently in learning activities.

“Kinahanglan gyud simple ug short ang instructions para masabtan dayon sa learner. Kung taas kaayo ang akong explanation, mawala dayon iyang attention. Mao nga ginabahin-bahin nako ang instructions step by step. Usahay kailangan pud nako i-demo ang activity para mas klaro niya. Mas responsive siya kung direct ug simple ang akong pagsulti.” “The instructions really need to be simple and short so the learner can understand them immediately. If my explanation is too long, the learner quickly loses attention. That is why I divide the instructions step by step. Sometimes, I also need to demonstrate the activity to make it clearer. The learner is more responsive when I speak in a direct and simple way.”
Participant 8

“Nabantayan nako nga malibog siya kung daghan kaayo og directions at the same time. Mao nang isa-isa ra gyud akong paghatag og instruction. Mag-repeat pud ko usahay aron sure nga nakasabot siya. Kung simple ang task expectation, mas dali siya moapil ug mahuman ang activity. Dako kaayo og difference ang clear communication sa iyang participation.” “I noticed that the learner becomes confused when there are too many directions given at the same time. That is why I give instructions one at a time. I also repeat them sometimes to make sure the learner understands. When the task expectation is simple, the learner can participate more easily and complete the activity. Clear communication makes a big difference in the learner’s participation.” Participant 7

3.1.5 Modifying Activities According to Attention Span

Participants highlighted the importance of adjusting instructional activities based on the learners’ capacity to sustain attention during classroom tasks. By shortening activities, dividing tasks into manageable segments, modifying lesson pacing, incorporating movement breaks, and shifting to more interactive tasks when signs of restlessness emerged, learners were better able to maintain focus and remain engaged. Participants further emphasized that recognizing individual attention limits and

flexibly adapting classroom activities helped reduce disruptive behaviors and promoted more productive and meaningful participation in learning.

“Dili gyud niya kaya ang taas nga activities without breaks. Mao nga ginashorten nako ang tasks ug ginadivide into smaller activities. Kung taas kaayo ang discussion, magsugod dayon siya og likoy-likoy o dili na maminaw. Mas effective kung naay short breaks in between lessons. Nakatabang gyud ni aron ma-maintain iyang focus.” “The learner really cannot handle long activities without breaks. That is why I shorten the tasks and divide them into smaller activities. If the discussion becomes too long, the learner immediately starts wandering around or stops listening. It is more effective when there are short breaks in between lessons. This has truly helped maintain the learner’s focus.” Participant 2

“Nabantayan nako nga mga pila ra ka minutes kaya niya magfocus sa usa ka activity. Mao nga ginachange nako ang pacing sa lesson depende sa iyang response. Kung makita nako nga restless na siya, mag-insert ko og movement break o simple activity. Dili pwede pugson siya dugay sa usa ka task kay mosamot iyang disruptive behavior. Flexible gyud dapat ang teacher.” “I noticed that the learner can only focus on one activity for a few minutes. That is why I adjust the pacing of the lesson depending on the learner’s response. When I see that the learner is becoming restless, I insert a movement break or a simple activity. You cannot force the learner to stay on one task for too long because the disruptive behavior may become worse. The teacher really needs to be flexible.” Participant 4

3.2 Sensory and Environmental Adaptations for Behavioral Regulation

3.2.1 Sensory-Based Learning Activities

Participants recognized the value of integrating sensory-rich experiences to enhance the learning engagement of learners with disruptive behavior. Through the use of tactile materials, movement-based tasks, visual supports, and hands-on activities, learners were provided with meaningful opportunities to process information more effectively, sustain attention, and participate more actively in both academic and social learning experiences.

“Mas attentive ang learner kung naay sensory activities during klase. Gigamit nako usahay ang textured materials, flashcards nga colorful, ug musical activities aron makuha iyang attention.

Nabantayan nako nga dali siya ma-bored kung puro lecture lang. Kung makahikap siya ug materials, mas active siya moapil sa activity. Makahelp pud ang movement activities para dili siya dali ma-irritate.” “The learner is more attentive when sensory activities are incorporated during class. I sometimes use textured materials, colorful flashcards, and musical activities to capture the learner’s attention. I noticed that the learner easily becomes bored when the lesson is purely lecture-based. When the learner is able to touch and interact with materials, they participate more actively in the activity. Movement-based activities also help prevent the learner from becoming easily irritated.” Participant 3

“Ang bata nga akong gihandle kay ganahan kaayo og activities nga naay sounds ug visuals. Mao nga usahay magbutang ko og action songs ug sensory bins during lesson proper. Kung wala ni nga activities, dali siya mawala sa focus ug magsige og tuyok sa classroom. Mas cooperative siya kung interactive ang learning materials. Kinahanglan gyud nga varied ang activities para ma-maintain iyang engagement.” “The learner I handle really enjoys activities that involve sounds and visuals. That is why I sometimes incorporate action songs and sensory bins during the lesson proper. Without these activities, the learner easily loses focus and keeps walking around the classroom. The learner becomes more cooperative when the learning materials are interactive. It is really necessary to vary the activities to maintain the learner’s engagement.” Participant 5

3.2.2 Monitoring Environmental Stimuli Affecting Behavior

Participants described the importance of carefully observing classroom environmental factors that influenced the behavioral responses of learners with disruptive behavior. Through monitoring sources of noise, visual distractions, lighting conditions, classroom crowding, and unexpected environmental changes, participants became more aware of specific triggers that contributed to restlessness, overstimulation, or disruptive behaviors. In response, participants implemented environmental adjustments such as minimizing unnecessary stimuli, modifying classroom arrangements, assigning quieter seating areas, and providing calming spaces to support emotional regulation, behavioral stability, and sustained classroom engagement.

“Nabantayan nako nga dali siya ma-distract kung saba kaayo ang classroom. Kung daghan og noise, magsugod dayon siyag tuyok-tuyok ug dili na maminaw. Mao nga ginaminimize nako ang

unnecessary sounds during activities. Usahay ginapalingkod pud nako siya sa area nga dili kaayo busy. Dako kaayo og epekto ang environment sa iyang behavior.” “I noticed that the learner is easily distracted when the classroom is too noisy. When there is too much noise, the learner immediately starts walking around and stops listening. That is why I minimize unnecessary sounds during activities. Sometimes, I also seat the learner in an area that is not too busy. The environment really has a big effect on the learner’s behavior.” Participant 5

“Ang learner sensitibo kaayo sa bright lights ug crowded nga setup. Kung daghan kaayo og visual distractions, dali siya ma-overstimulate ug magtantrums. Mao nga ginasymply nako ang classroom arrangement aron dili siya ma-overwhelm. Kung makita nako nga uneasy na siya, ginahatagan nako siyag quiet space. Kinahanglan attentive gyud ang teacher sa environmental triggers.” “The learner is very sensitive to bright lights and crowded setups. When there are too many visual distractions, the learner easily becomes overstimulated and has tantrums. That is why I simplify the classroom arrangement so the learner will not feel overwhelmed. When I notice that the learner is becoming uneasy, I provide a quiet space. The teacher really needs to be attentive to environmental triggers.” Participant 6

3.3 Fostering Inclusive Social Participation and Emotional Safety

3.3.1 Creating Safe and Inclusive Learning Spaces

Participants emphasized the intentional creation of classroom environments where learners with disruptive behavior felt accepted, respected, and emotionally secure. Through promoting positive peer interactions, guiding learners toward empathy and acceptance, addressing conflicts immediately, preventing teasing or exclusion, and establishing clear classroom expectations, participants fostered a supportive and welcoming atmosphere for all learners. Participants further observed that when learners experienced emotional safety and a sense of belonging within the classroom, they demonstrated greater confidence, improved behavior, and more active participation in academic and social activities.

“Ginapaningkamotan gyud nako nga mahimong welcoming ang classroom para sa learner with autism. Gitudluan pud nako ang ubang bata nga mahimong respectful ug understanding sa ilang classmate. Dili nako gusto nga ma-feel niya nga lain siya sa grupo. Gina-encourage nako ang positive interaction during activities.

Kung safe iyang na-feel sa classroom, mas cooperative siya during lessons.” “I really make an effort to create a welcoming classroom for the learner with autism. I also teach the other learners to be respectful and understanding toward their classmate. I do not want the learner to feel different from the group. I encourage positive interaction during activities. When the learner feels safe in the classroom, they become more cooperative during lessons.”
Participant 1

“Importante nga naay supportive environment aron dili mahadlok mo-express ang learner. Usahay man gud ma-frustrate siya kung dili siya masabtan sa classmates. Mao nga ginaguide nako ang tanan learners sa proper interaction ug acceptance. Nabantayan nako nga mas confident siya mojoin sa group activities kung comfortable siya sa classroom atmosphere. Inclusive space gyud makahelp sa iyang participation.” “It is important to have a supportive environment so the learner will not be afraid to express themselves. There are times when the learner becomes frustrated because their classmates do not understand them. That is why I guide all the learners on proper interaction and acceptance. I noticed that the learner becomes more confident in joining group activities when they feel comfortable with the classroom atmosphere. An inclusive space truly helps support the learner’s participation.”
Participant 5

3.3.2 Regulating Peer Interaction During Disruptions

Participants emphasized the intentional management of peer relationships during moments of classroom disruption to preserve a respectful, orderly, and supportive learning environment. By facilitating appropriate social boundaries, redirecting unhelpful behaviors, and encouraging empathy, cooperation, and mutual respect among classmates, learners were guided toward positive social engagement while minimizing distractions and maintaining inclusive classroom participation.

“Naa gyud times nga malain ang ubang bata kung magsyagit o manghilabot ang learner with autism. Mao nga ginatudluan pud nako ang classmates niya nga mahimong understanding ug patient. Gina-explain nako nga lahi-lahi ta ug ways sa pag-express sa feelings. Hinay-hinay, mas nidawat ang mga bata niya sa classroom. Nakatabang gyud ang positive peer interaction sa iyang behavior.” “There are really times when other learners become uncomfortable when the learner with autism screams or interferes with others. That is why I also teach the classmates to be

understanding and patient. I explain to them that each person has different ways of expressing their feelings. Gradually, the learners became more accepting of their classmate in the classroom. Positive peer interaction has truly helped improve the learner's behavior."

Participant 6

"Kung disruptive na siya during group activities, usahay mahadlok ang ubang learners. Mao nga bantayan gyud nako ang ilang interaction aron malikayan ang conflict. Gina-guide nako ang classmates unsaon pagtabang ug pag-approach niya properly. Dili pud nako pasagdan nga ma-isolate siya sa grupo. Gusto nako nga inclusive gihapon iyang experience sa classroom." *"When the learner becomes disruptive during group activities, there are times when the other learners become afraid. That is why I closely monitor their interactions to prevent conflict. I guide the classmates on how to help and approach the learner properly. I also make sure that the learner is not isolated from the group. I want the learner's classroom experience to remain inclusive."* Participant 2

4. Discussion

4.1 Structured and Responsive Classroom Management

The findings revealed that kindergarten teachers managed disruptive behaviors among learners with autism by establishing predictable classroom routines, responding to emotional meltdowns calmly, regulating peer interactions, and handling resistance during classroom transitions. These practices support previous studies emphasizing that structured routines and predictable classroom environments help reduce anxiety and disruptive behaviors among autistic learners in inclusive classrooms. Research also highlighted that calm teacher responses and guided peer interactions contributed to improved emotional regulation and classroom participation among learners with autism (Hume et al., 2021). Moreover, transition supports such as visual schedules, countdowns, and preparatory cues were found effective in minimizing resistance and behavioral disruptions during activity changes (Liang et al., 2024). These assertions affirm the participants' experiences those consistent routines and supportive classroom management strategies contributed to better behavioral responses among learners with autism.

However, some studies presented contrasting views regarding the effectiveness of structured classroom management practices alone in addressing disruptive behaviors among learners with autism. According to Majadley (2025), rigid routines and highly controlled classroom structures may sometimes limit learners' independence and adaptability to changing situations. Other researchers argued that emotional meltdowns and peer-related disruptions among autistic learners may persist

despite structured interventions due to the complexity of sensory, emotional, and communication difficulties associated with autism (Petersson-Bloom & Holmqvist, 2022). Furthermore, certain studies emphasized that classroom management strategies may become less effective when teachers experience limited professional training and insufficient behavioral support resources in inclusive settings (Villar & Marcia, 2025). These contrasting findings suggest that managing disruptive behaviors requires not only routines and behavioral supports but also broader institutional and professional assistance for teachers.

4.2 Sensory and Environmental Adaptations for Behavioral Regulation

The findings showed that kindergarten teachers sustained the attention and participation of learners with autism by utilizing sensory-based learning activities, simplifying instructions, integrating play-based strategies, and modifying activities according to learners' attention spans. These findings align with studies emphasizing that sensory-rich and play-based activities promote engagement, participation, and sustained attention among autistic learners in early childhood classrooms (Gibson et al., 2021). Research also demonstrated that simplified instructions and visually supported communication improved task comprehension and reduced frustration among learners with autism during classroom activities (Bateman et al., 2023). Additionally, adapting activities according to learners' developmental and attentional needs was identified as an effective strategy in supporting participation and minimizing disengagement in inclusive educational settings (Meindl et al., 2020). These studies affirm the participants' perceptions regarding the importance of flexible and learner-centered instructional practices in sustaining classroom engagement among learners with autism.

In contrast, some literature suggested that sensory-based and play-oriented approaches may not consistently sustain attention and participation among all learners with autism. According to Loh et al. (2021), certain sensory activities may overstimulate some autistic learners and unintentionally increase distractibility or disruptive behaviors. Other studies also argued that modifying activities too frequently according to attention span may reduce opportunities for learners to develop task persistence and independent learning skills (Fulcher et al., 2021). Moreover, researchers noted that play-based participation strategies may become challenging to implement effectively in overcrowded inclusive classrooms with limited resources and insufficient teacher preparation (Acharya, 2025). These contrasting perspectives indicate that sustaining attention and participation among learners with autism requires careful balancing of instructional flexibility and structured learning expectations.

4.3 Fostering Inclusive Social Participation and Emotional Safety

The findings indicated that kindergarten teachers fostered inclusive social participation and emotional safety by promoting positive peer interactions, creating

safe and inclusive learning spaces, collaborating with families, and implementing individualized behavior supports. These findings support previous studies emphasizing that collaborative partnerships between teachers and families and individualized behavioral interventions contribute positively to the behavioral and social development of learners with autism (Santiago et al., 2022). Research also highlighted that creating emotionally safe and inclusive learning environments strengthened learners' sense of belonging, peer interaction, and classroom participation in inclusive settings (Majadley, 2025). Furthermore, monitoring classroom environmental stimuli such as noise, lighting, and overcrowding helped reduce sensory overload and disruptive behaviors among learners with autism (Al Qutub et al., 2024). These assertions affirm the participants' experiences that supportive, inclusive, and collaborative classroom practices enhanced the social participation and emotional well-being of learners with autism.

Nevertheless, some studies challenged the effectiveness of individualized interventions and environmental modifications when implemented without adequate systemic support. According to Al Jaffal (2022), teachers may struggle to consistently apply individualized behavioral strategies due to large class sizes, limited time, and insufficient access to autism-specific resources. Other researchers noted that family-school collaboration may become inconsistent when parents and teachers differ in behavioral expectations and intervention practices (Azad et al., 2020). Additionally, studies argued that creating inclusive learning spaces alone may not fully address disruptive behaviors if schools lack trained personnel and specialized intervention programs for autistic learners (Gómez-Marí et al., 2022). These contrasting findings suggest that effective classroom management for learners with autism requires comprehensive institutional support alongside teacher-led interventions.

5. Conclusion

The study concluded that kindergarten teachers handling learners with autism utilized structured routines, responsive classroom management strategies, sensory-based activities, and individualized interventions to manage disruptive behaviors and sustain learner engagement in inclusive classrooms. Teachers also emphasized the importance of family collaboration, environmental monitoring, and creating safe and inclusive learning spaces to support positive behavior and participation among learners with autism.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended that schools strengthen professional development programs and classroom support systems for kindergarten teachers handling learners with autism in inclusive settings. Teachers may also be provided with training on behavior management strategies, sensory-responsive instruction, and inclusive classroom practices to better support the behavioral and learning needs of learners with autism.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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