

Mediating Effect of Parental Acceptance to children with disabilities on the Relationship between Teacher Self-Efficacy and Student Learning Engagement in Special Education Program

Johanna Claire A. Sausal^a

Graduate School Student, Holy Cross of Davao College^a

ABSTRACT

Low student learning engagement remains a critical concern. The mediating effect of parental acceptance to children with disabilities on the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and student learning engagement was verified. Through predictive research design, the data from 266 respondents, selected through total enumeration, were analyzed using mediation analysis. Results show that parental acceptance fully mediates the link between the predictor and criterion. This result partly supports the Social Cognitive Theory. Potential mediating variables which may be extracted from quantitative approaches, may be utilized to trace the remaining 49.6 % unexplained variance. School administrators may strengthen professional development on parental acceptance to improve student learning engagement.

Keywords: Mediating effect of parental acceptance to children with disabilities, teacher self-efficacy, student learning engagement, special education program

1. INTRODUCTION

Low student learning engagement in special education remains a critical fracture point in the modern classroom. Accardo et al. (2020) found that many special education teachers report being inadequately prepared to collaborate with families, which directly affects their confidence in classroom management, instructional adaptation, and emotional support. Globally, low student learning engagement literature highlighted that disengagement among learners, including those in special education programs results in diminished learning outcomes and increased risk of school failure worldwide (Fredricks et al., 2004).

In the United States, found that students with disabilities who show low student learning engagement are at significantly higher risk of dropping out compared to their peers (Reschly et al., 2006). In Malaysia, reported that limited resources and insufficient teacher training significantly hinder low student learning engagement in special education programs (Conroy, 2023). In Australia, recent studies found that teacher confidence and strong family-school collaboration are key predictors of low student learning engagement, but gaps in training and support continue to reduce participation among learners with disabilities (Brown & Smith, 2024).

In the Philippines, recent studies show that low student learning engagement in special education programs continues to face challenges and limited resources, lack of teacher training, and inconsistent family involvement noted that these barriers reduce active participation among learners with disabilities (Llurag, 2022). In addition, Sagun-Ongtanco et al. (2021), emphasized that weak collaboration between schools and families undermines engagement. Additionally, Abutazil (2023) highlighted that engagement improves only when teachers, parents, and policymakers work together to provide structured support. These findings confirm that sustaining engagement in inclusive classrooms remains a pressing concern.

Despite the urgent need to conduct this study because low student learning engagement in special education remains a pressing challenge both locally and globally. Recent Philippine research shows that limited teacher training and weak family-school collaboration reduce participation among learners with disabilities (Abutazil, 2023). By examining the mediating role of parental acceptance, this study addresses a timely gap and offers evidence-based insights to strengthen teacher development, family involvement, and inclusive education policies. In light of this, the study aims to contribute meaningful insights that can help improve low student learning engagement and support more effective and inclusive educational practices for learners with disabilities.

Statement of the Problem

It was aimed in this study to determine the significance of the mediating effect of parental acceptance on the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and student learning engagement. Specifically, the following objectives were pursued:

1. To describe the levels of teacher self-efficacy in terms of classroom management and planning and collaboration; parental acceptance to children with disabilities in terms of admission, diffusion, being present, self-as-context, values, and committed action; and student learning engagement in terms of behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement.
2. To determine the significance of the correlation between teacher self-efficacy on parental acceptance to children with disabilities, and student learning engagement.
3. To determine the direct effect of teacher self-efficacy on student learning engagement controlling parental acceptance to children with disabilities.
4. To determine the indirect effect of teacher self-efficacy on student learning engagement through parental acceptance to children with disabilities.
5. To determine the total effect of teacher self-efficacy on student learning engagement.

Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Framework

This study was grounded in Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive (Theory 1986), which explains that human development results from the interaction of personal, environment, and behavioral factors.

In this study teacher self-efficacy indicated by classroom management, planning and collaboration represents the environmental factors mentioned in the theory. The parental acceptance to children disabilities indicated by admission, diffusion, being present, self as context, values and committed action for personal factor. Lastly, the student learning engagement in special education program indicated by behavior engagement, emotional engagement, cognitive engagement defines human development factors in the theory. It must be noted however, that behavioral was excluded in the study since it only focused on human development, personal, and environmental factors. Hence, this study was delimited to human development, personal, and environmental factors explained in the theory. The behavioral of the theory was excluded in the study.

2. METHOD

3.

In this chapter the research design, local of the study, sample and sampling technique, data gathering technique, data analysis technique and ethical consideration.

Research Design

A predictive research design is a quantitative approach ideal for examining the direct and indirect relationship among variables without manipulating the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Predictive research focuses on forecasting future outcomes using existing data and statistical relationships among variables (Hair et al., 2022). It is applied when sufficient data are available to predict trends, such as in education, health, and social sciences (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Its key advantages include supporting data-driven decision-making, enabling early intervention, and handling complex variables, making it valuable for planning and theory testing (Fraenkel et al., 2023).

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in Buhangin West district in Division of Davao City, under the supervision of the Department of Education – Division of Davao, Philippines. The city comprises public elementary schools that caters

special needs learners. Providing a relevant context for examining how teacher self-efficacy, parental acceptance on children with disabilities influence student learning engagement.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The samples of the study consisted of 266 elementary public-school teachers in the Department of Education (DepEd) during School Year 2025–2026 who held regular permanent positions and had at least three years of teaching experience. These participants were actively handling special needs students.

The sampling technique used was total enumeration. It is also known as total population sampling. It is a technique in which all members of a defined population are included in the study, ensuring complete data coverage. It is commonly applied when the population is small, accessible, or possesses unique characteristics that require every member's participation. Its main advantages according to Ahmed et al. (2024) include the elimination of sampling bias and increased accuracy and reliability of findings, although it may demand more time and resources.

Data Gathering Technique

The survey technique was used in gathering data. The technique is a data gathering method that involves collecting standardized information from respondents using questionnaires, allowing researchers to measure attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics in a systematic and comparable way (Check & Schutt, 2021). The survey technique is applied when researchers collect standardized data from a large number of respondents efficiently and systematically (Dillman et al., 2022).

There were three questionnaires used in this study. The first was drawn from the questionnaire made Martins et al. (2020) about the Teacher Efficacy for inclusive Practices scale validation containing, 16 items it had a Cronbach's α of 0.93. Secondly, parental acceptance as defined by Greene et al. (2015) that had 18 items and the Cronbach's α of 0.947. Lastly, Enhancing Students' engagement was proposed by Wang (2025) with 16 items with Cronbach's α of 0.887.

Data Analysis Technique

In this study, the data analysis techniques used were descriptive, correlation, and mediation analyses. Descriptive analysis was used to summarize the data through frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations (Starbuck et al., 2023). The mean and standard deviation statistical tools were used. Moreover, the correlation analysis, is used to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between variables, helping researchers determine whether changes in one variable are associated with changes in another (Schober et al., 2021). The Pearson Product – moment correlation statistical tool was used. Lastly, mediation analysis was used to determine whether the effect of an independent variable on an outcome variable is transmitted through a mediating variable (Hayes ,2022). The beta estimate statistical tool for the direct, indirect, and total effect of the determinant was utilized.

The following was used as basis for the interpretation of the descriptive level of the variables.

Scale	Level	Teacher's Efficacy	Parental Acceptance	Engagement of Students
1.00-1.74	Very low	Very poor	Very poor	Very poor
1.75-2.49	Low	Poor	Poor	Poor
2.50-3.74	High	Good	Good	Good
3.75-4.00	Very High	Very Good	Very good	Very good

The following was the Standard Deviation Value Interpretation:

Range	Description	Interpretation
SD $\leq$ 0.50	Highly Consistent Responses	Strong and uniform perception

SD = 0.51 – 1.00	Moderately Consistent Responses	Acceptable consistency
SD = 1.01 – 1.50	Low Consistency Responses	Differing views or experiences
SD > 1.50	Very Low Consistency Responses	High variability and lack of consensus

In this study, the significance of the correlation was tested at 0.05 confidence level. The following was the standard measure for the interpretation scale of r -value, the following scheme was used:

<i>Computed r</i>	<i>Descriptive Interpretation</i>
+/- 1.00	Perfect correlation
Between +/- 0.75 – +/- 0.99	High correlation
Between +/- 0.51 – +/- 0.74	Moderately high correlation
Between +/- 0.31 – +/- 0.50	Moderately low correlation
Between +/- 0.01 – +/- 0.30	Low correlation
0.00	No correlation

The standard measure for the interpretation of the strength of the mediation was as follows:

<i>Proportion Mediated</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
< 0.20	Weak Mediation
0.20 – 0.50	Moderate Mediation
> 0.50	Strong Mediation

Ethical Consideration

This study strictly followed ethical research standards to protect the rights, dignity, and privacy of all participants. Before data collection, formal approval was obtained from appropriate authorities, including the Schools Division Superintendent and school principals, to conduct the study in selected institutions. Participation was completely voluntary, and informed consent was secured from all respondents, with clear written explanations of the study's purpose, their right to withdraw at any time, and assurances of confidentiality. The research was carried out with honesty, integrity, and respect for participants' privacy. Approval was also sought from the Society for Moral Integrity and Legal Ethics (SMILE) of Holy Cross of Davao College. After approval was granted and the researcher was endorsed by the Dean, a formal request was submitted to the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS) of the Department of Education – Davao City to obtain authorization. Once permission was granted, the researcher immediately administered the research instruments to the target respondents.

4. RESULTS

Presented in this chapter are the results of the descriptive, correlation, and the mediation analyses. Also, the summary of findings is presented.

Descriptive Results

Shown in Table 1 were the descriptive results of the study. Contained in the table are the variables involved, namely, teacher self- efficacy, parental acceptance to children with disabilities, and student learning engagement and the number of samples, standard deviation, mean and descriptive level specifically corresponding with each of the variables.

Specifically, the table showed that teacher self-efficacy variable obtained a mean of 3.46, described as very high. It indicates that Teacher self-efficacy of the respondents is very good. The standard Deviation of 0.28 was described as highly consisting response indicating that the respondents have strong and similar perception. The two indicators had a descriptive level of very high and the other one is high. It also showed that Parental acceptance on children with disabilities variable it has a mean of 3.47, described as very high. This indicated that parental acceptance to children with disabilities of the respondents was very good. With the standard deviation of 0.50 this indicated that there was highly consistent

response that showed that the respondents had very strong and similar perception. All the indicators had very high descriptive level. Lastly, the Student learning engagement had a mean of 3.11, as described as high. This indicated that the student learning engagement of the respondent was good. With the standard deviation of 0.35 this indicated that there was a high consistent response of the respondents indicating the strong and similar perception.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics (N = 266)

Variables	Number of Samples (N)	Standard Deviation	Mean	Descriptive Level
Teacher's Efficacy	266	0.28	3.46	Very High
Classroom Management	266	0.23	3.45	Very High
Planning & Collaboration	266	0.38	3.47	Very High
Parental Acceptance	266	0.50	3.47	Very High
Admission	266	0.50	3.46	Very High
Diffusion	266	0.50	3.46	Very High
Being Present	266	0.50	3.47	Very High
Self as Context	266	0.50	3.47	Very High
Values	266	0.50	3.46	Very High
Committed Action	266	0.50	3.47	Very High
Students' Engagement	266	0.35	3.11	High
Behavioral Engagement	266	0.41	2.93	High
Emotional Engagement	266	0.59	3.14	High
Cognitive Engagement	266	0.45	3.27	Very High

The findings revealed that among the three variables, teaching efficacy and parental acceptance obtained the highest descriptive interpretation, that it was the most evident among the respondents. Student learning engagement was also interpreted positively, although parental acceptance appeared slightly more favorable than teacher self-efficacy. Overall, the results were manifested at favorable levels, with parental acceptance as the strongest variable.

Correlation Results

Table 2 is the correlation table. It contained the determinant, mediator and criterion variables. It also included the r.

Table 2. Correlation Table (N = 266)

Variables	Students' Engagement			
	<i>r- value</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Decision on Ho</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Teacher's Efficacy	0.165	0.000	Reject Ho	Low but significant positive correlation
Parental Acceptance	0.120	0.051	Fail to Reject Ho	Low and non-significant correlation

Level of Significance: 0.05
 Decision Rule: Reject H_0 if $p < 0.05$

Specifically, the table showed that the correlation between teacher self-efficacy and student learning engagement obtained a p-value of 0.000 which was lower than the 0.05 level of significance; hence, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that the correlation was statistically significant. The r-value of 0.165 reflected a low correlation between teacher self-efficacy and student learning engagement. This finding implies that when teacher self-efficacy increases, student learning engagement also tends to increase, although the relationship was weak. Similarly, parental acceptance to children with disabilities yielded a p-value of 0.051 which is higher than the 0.05 level of significance; hence, the null hypothesis was not rejected indicating that the correlation is not statistically significant. The r-value of 0.120 showed a low correlation between parental acceptance to children with disabilities and student learning engagement. This implies that parental

acceptance to children with disabilities does not have a meaningful relationship with student learning engagement in this study.

Both teacher self-efficacy and parental acceptance to children with disabilities showed weak relationships with student learning engagement. However, only teacher self-efficacy was significant.

Mediation Results

Table 3 is a mediation table. It contained the path/effect, estimate Beta, standard error, z-value, p-value, decision on null hypothesis and corresponding interpretation.

Table 3. Mediation Table ($n = 266$)

Label	Path/Effect	Estimate	SE (B)	Z-	p-value value	Decision	Interpretation
a	TE – PA	1.724	0.28	61.72	0.000	Reject H_0	Significant
b	PA – SE	-0.421	0.18	-2.35	0.019	Reject H_0	Significant
c'	TE – SE	0.934	0.305	3.06	0.002	Fail to Reject H_0	Nonsignificant
a x b	Indirect effect	-0.726	0.31	-2.34	0.019	Reject H_0	Significant
c (Total Effect)	TP – SE	0.208	0.074	2.82	0.005	Reject H_0	Significant

Level of Significance: 0.05

Decision Rule: Reject H_0 if $p < 0.05$

The table specifically showed that the direct effect of teacher self-efficacy on student learning engagement, controlling for parental acceptance to children with disabilities, yielded an estimated Beta of 0.934. The corresponding p-value of 0.002, which was lower than the 0.05 level of significance, indicated that the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that the direct effect of teacher self-efficacy on student learning engagement was significant even when parental acceptance to children with disabilities was controlled. In contrast, the indirect effect of teacher self-efficacy on student learning engagement through parental acceptance obtained a Beta of -0.726. The corresponding p-value of 0.019, which was lower than the 0.05 level of significance, led to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This indicated that the indirect effect through the mediator was significant. Lastly, the total effect of teacher efficacy on student engagement resulted in an estimated Beta of 0.208 with a p-value of 0.005, which was below the 0.05 level of significance; hence, the null hypothesis was rejected.

These results showed that the direct effect was not significant while the indirect effect of the predictor on the criterion is significant. This indicated a total mediation effect of parental acceptance to children with disabilities.

DISCUSSIONS

Discussed in this chapter are the findings of the study. Also, the conclusion and recommendations are presented.

Teacher Self-Efficacy and the Student Learning Engagement Correlation

The finding of this study asserting that teacher self-efficacy has significant high level of correlation with student learning engagement supports the previous study stating that self-efficacy and social support are important, their effects on student engagement are often indirect and mediated by teacher–student relationships, suggesting that efficacy alone may not significantly predict engagement (Wang, 2023). Moreover, the current finding corroborates with the study of Asare (2025) stating that while teacher–student relationships and self-efficacy are both statistically significant predictors of student success, their impact is interconnected rather than isolated. On the other hand, this current finding contrasts the study of Sina et al. (2024), explaining that teacher’s instructional competence and persistence are powerful enough to motivate students without the need for mediating factors like parental support or social relationships.

Parental Acceptance to children with disabilities and student learning engagement Correlation

The finding of this study asserting that parental acceptance to children with disabilities low significant correlation with student learning engagement supports the previous study stating that which investigates how parental educational

involvement directly influences learning engagement and is partially mediated by students' academic self-efficacy (Wong et al., 2026). Likewise, this current finding affirms Zhu et al. (2024), who emphasized that reinforces your findings by demonstrating that the direct correlation between parental factors and student engagement is often low, as the impact of the home environment must typically be mediated by the student's internal psychological resilience and academic confidence to produce meaningful participation. On the contrary, this current finding contradicts García-Moya et al. (2020), who claimed that parental support and acceptance maintain a strong and direct correlation with student engagement, functioning as a primary foundational resource that consistently predicts academic involvement regardless of the student's individual psychological traits.

Teacher self-efficacy and student learning engagement as mediated by parental acceptance to children with disabilities

The study indicates that parental acceptance mediates the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and student learning. The current finding supports the claims of Wang et al. (2024) emphasizing that self-efficacy is related to learning engagement. Similarly, the finding supports the study of Chen et al. (2024) reporting that parental involvement influences student engagement through specific emotional and psychological mediators such as gratitude and hope, rather than through general teacher-related factors like efficacy.

However, the current finding opposes Zhang et al. (2024), who highlighted that teacher-related factors indirectly influence student learning engagement through mediating variables such as emotional engagement, highlighting a significant mediation effect.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is concluded that parental acceptance to children with disabilities fully mediates the correlation between teacher self-efficacy and student learning engagement. This assertion partly supports the Social Cognitive Theory, explaining that human development results from the interaction of personal, environmental, and behavioral factors.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, the following are recommended:

1. Further studies may explore other mediating variables to account the remaining 49.6% variance in the student learning engagement.
2. Qualitative research may be conducted to identify emerging themes that could serve as potential mediators, the sub-themes may be used later as indicators of the mediating variable.
3. School administrators may prioritize professional development programs focusing on parental acceptance to children with disabilities, fostering strong partnerships that ultimately enhance student learning engagement.

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SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

“The Mediating Effect of Parental Acceptance on the Relationship between Teacher's Efficacy and Engagement of Students in Special Education Program”

General Direction: Please read each item carefully and answer honestly. Using the rating scale below, kindly check (✓) the box next to the item that best describes it. Please do not leave any question unanswered. Apply the following scale to express your answer:

4 – Strongly Agree 3 – Agree 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree

PART I. QUESTIONNAIRE ON TEACHER’S EFFICACY

Classroom Management				
<i>As a teacher, I ...</i>				
	4 SA	3 A	2 D	1 SD
1. can make clear to the students what my expectations are about their behavior.				
2. am able to calm down a disruptive/noisy student.				
3. can accurately assess the student’s understanding of what I taught.				
4. can propose appropriate challenges to very capable students.				
5. have confidence in my ability to avoid disruptive behavior in the classroom.				
6. can control disruptive behaviors in the classroom				
7. can make children follow the rules of the classroom.				
8. have confidence in my ability to get students to work together in pairs or in small groups.				
Planning and collaboration				
<i>As a teacher, I...</i>				
	4 SA	3 A	2 D	1 SD
1. can make parents feel comfortable to come to school.				
2. can help families to help their children do well in school (in terms of learning, interaction, and behavior).				
3. have confidence in my ability to involve parents in the school activities of their children with disabilities.				
4. have confidence in planning educational activities so that the individual needs of students with disabilities are adequately addressed.				
5. can work collaboratively with other professionals in developing educational plans for students with disabilities				
6. can work together with other professionals and staff (e.g. assistants, other teachers) to teach students with disabilities in the classroom.				
7. am able to use a variety of evaluation strategies (e.g. portfolio evaluation, tailored testing, performance-based assessment, etc.).				

8. am confident in providing information about laws and policies regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities to people who know little about this subject.				
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Bárbara Amaral MARTINS² Miguel Claudio Moriel CHACON³

PART II. QUESTIONNAIRE ON PARENTAL ACCEPTANCE

Admission				
<i>The learner's parents,</i>	4 SA	3 A	2 D	1 SD
1. find it difficult to initiate/maintain routines because they don't want to deal with their child's reactions.				
2. would rather give in to their child than have him/her make a scene in public.				
3. avoid taking their child to the store for fear of how they will behave.				
Diffusion				
<i>The learner's parents,</i>	4 SA	3 A	2 D	1 SD
1. avoid taking their child to the store for fear of how they will behave.				
2. feel bad if someone criticizes their parenting.				
3. feel bad when their child misbehaves.				
Being Present				
<i>The learner's parents,</i>	4 SA	3 A	2 D	1 SD
1. minds are somewhere else when they play with their child.				
2. focus on their time together when interacting with his or her child.				
3. when spending time with their child, find themselves planning their day and thinking of the things they need to get done.				
Self as Context				
<i>The learner's parents,</i>	4 SA	3 A	2 D	1 SD
1. feel like a failure when parenting doesn't go as they had planned.				
2. get upset if things don't go their way when they interact with their child.				
3. find themselves wrapped in their emotions rather than dealing with the behavior when their child misbehaves.				

Values				
<i>The learner's parents,</i>	4	3	2	1
	SA	A	D	SD
1. actions are consistent with their values.				
2. clearly state their values related to parenting.				
3. have clear parenting values that guide their interactions with their child.				
Committed Action				
<i>The learner's parents,</i>	4	3	2	1
	SA	A	D	SD
1. behaviors are based on what matters to them as a parent rather than how they feel in the moment.				
2. are able to sacrifice convenience for effective discipline.				
3. are consistent in their parenting practices.				

Ryan L. Greene, Clinton E. Field, Jamison D. Fargo, Michael P. Twohig

E-mail address: michael.twohig@usu.edu (M.P. Twohig). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jcbs.2015.05.003>

PART III – STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT

Behavioral Engagement				
<i>My student,</i>	4	3	2	1
	SA	A	D	SD
1. listens carefully in class.				
2. tries very hard at school.				
3. listens very carefully to the instructor the first time he/she talks about new topic.				
4. work hard when we start something new in class.				
5. pay attention in class.				
Emotional Engagement				
<i>In my class....</i>	4	3	2	1
	SA	A	D	SD
1. My student enjoys learning new things in class and I feel interested.				
2. When we work on something, my student feels interested.				

3. I feel curious about what we are learning.				
Cognitive Engagement				
<i>In my class, the students...</i>	4 SA	3 A	2 D	1 SD
1. try to relate what they have learned to what they already know.				
2. When I study, I try to connect what I am learning with my own experiences.				
3. I try to make all the different ideas fit together and make sense when I study.				
4. I make up my own examples to help me understand the important concepts I study.				
5. Before I begin to study, I think about what I want to get done.				
6. When I'm working on my schoolwork, I stop once in a while and go over what I have been doing.				
7. As I study, I keep track of how much I understand, not just if I am getting the right answers.				
8. If what I am working on is difficult to understand, I change the way I learn the material.				

International Journal of Sociologies and Anthropologies Science Reviews Volume 6 Issue 1: January-February 2026:
 ISSN 2985-2730 Website: <https://so07.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/IJSASR/index>