

Describing the Special Education Learners' Developmental Milestone: An Embedded Mixed-Method Study

Jenny Babe B. Pacaldo

Antero U. Roa Central School, Schools Division of Ozamiz City, Northern Mindanao School of Science and Technology, Labuyo, Tangub City

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ABSTRACT

Learners with special education needs (LSENs) require tailored interventions to support their developmental milestones and maximize their potential in various domains. This study evaluated the effectiveness of a Home Intervention Program on the developmental milestones of learners with special education needs (LSENs) in Ozamiz City, Philippines. Employing an embedded mixed-method research design, the study utilized quantitative assessments and qualitative interviews with 16 LSENs and their parents. Results indicated a significant increase in the mean weighted score of developmental milestones from 2.71 before the intervention to 4.14 afterward, demonstrating marked improvement in cognitive, social-emotional, and communication skills. Parents reported positive perceptions of the program, highlighting enhanced skills in their children and the importance of family involvement. Key themes from parental feedback included satisfaction experiences, implementation challenges, and suggestions for improved resources and ongoing support. The findings underscore the effectiveness of the Home Intervention Program in fostering developmental progress among LSENs while emphasizing the need for structured support for parents to optimize engagement. Recommendations include developing comprehensive toolkits for parents, establishing regular follow-ups, and creating opportunities for parental networking. This research contributes valuable insights into the role of home-based interventions in special education, offering pathways for enhancing educational outcomes for LSENs.

Keywords: developmental milestones, learners with special education needs, home intervention program, parental perceptions, mixed-method research, cognitive skills, social-emotional development.

INTRODUCTION

Developmental milestones track a child's growth across various domains, helping identify typical development and potential delays. These milestones encompass social/emotional, gross motor, fine motor, language, and cognitive skills, serving as crucial indicators of a child's progress. For learners with special education needs (LSENs), developmental milestones are essential in guiding educators and caregivers to design interventions tailored to their unique requirements. The increasing global prevalence of special education needs highlights the importance of effective strategies to foster development in this population. According to the World Health Organization (2021), approximately 15% of the global population lives with some form of disability, with many facing developmental challenges.

Studies in the Philippines have identified significant gaps in support and resources for LSENs (Department of Education, 2020). Local data from the Ozamiz City Division reveal an urgent need for effective home intervention programs to address the specific developmental needs of these learners. Despite existing literature on developmental milestones, limited research explores the effectiveness of home intervention programs in the Philippine context. Few studies have examined these interventions' quantitative and qualitative aspects, leaving critical gaps in understanding their efficacy and parental perspectives.

This study seeks to address these gaps by evaluating the levels of LSENs' developmental milestones before and after home intervention programs. It also aims to capture parents' perceptions of the interventions' effectiveness through an embedded mixed-method approach. By providing a comprehensive analysis, the research aims to offer valuable insights into the impact of these programs on LSENs and their families.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform educators, policymakers, and practitioners about effective strategies to support LSENs. Home intervention programs can play a pivotal role in enhancing these learners' quality of life and educational outcomes. By identifying strengths and areas for improvement in existing strategies, the study aims to contribute to developing more targeted and impactful interventions.

Globally, children with disabilities often face barriers to learning and development, emphasizing the necessity for early and targeted support (UNESCO, 2020). Research has consistently shown that early intervention significantly improves outcomes for children with special needs (Guralnick, 2011). In the Philippine context, the role of parents in supporting LSENs is increasingly recognized (Harrison et al., 2020). However, most existing studies focus on in-school interventions, leaving a gap in understanding the potential of home-based approaches. This study bridges that gap by examining the developmental milestones of LSENs and parental perceptions of home intervention programs.

This research provides a deeper understanding of how home intervention programs can support LSENs, contributing to academic discourse and practical applications in special education. The findings aim to guide the development of more effective educational strategies, ultimately improving the developmental outcomes for learners with special education needs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The developmental milestones of learners with special education needs (LSENs) encompass various domains, including cognitive, social-emotional, language, and motor skills. This literature review examines the existing research related to these variables, highlighting their significance and the impact of interventions on each area.

Cognitive Development

Cognitive development is fundamental for LSENs, as it influences their ability to understand and engage with their environment. Research shows that targeted interventions can significantly enhance cognitive skills in children with special educational needs (Guralnick, 2011). Programs that incorporate structured activities, such as problem-solving tasks and critical thinking exercises, have been linked to improved cognitive outcomes (Higgins et al., 2017). Furthermore, integrating technology in interventions has fostered cognitive engagement, providing interactive learning experiences catering to diverse learning styles (Alqadheeb et al., 2020).

Social-Emotional Development

Social-emotional skills are critical for LSENs, as they underpin the ability to form relationships and navigate social situations. Studies indicate that interventions focusing on social skills training can improve peer interactions and emotional regulation (Hemmeter et al., 2016). Moreover, research has found that fostering positive peer relationships and promoting an inclusive environment significantly enhances social-emotional outcomes for LSENs (Fox et al., 2015). The involvement of parents in social-emotional development initiatives further strengthens these outcomes, as parents can reinforce skills learned in interventions at home (Harrison et al., 2020).

Language Development

Language skills are essential for effective communication and academic success. Evidence suggests that early and consistent intervention can substantially improve vocabulary and expressive language skills for LSENs (Justice & Ezell, 2004). Programs emphasizing language-rich environments, such as shared reading and interactive storytelling, have proven effective in enhancing language development (Barton et al., 2012). Additionally, incorporating multi-sensory approaches in language interventions has been shown to cater to diverse learning needs, enabling LSENs to engage more fully in language acquisition processes (Bishop et al., 2016).

Motor Skills Development

Motor skills, both fine and gross, are essential for daily living and independence. Research highlights the

importance of physical activity in enhancing motor development among LSENs (Duncan et al., 2018). Interventions that promote movement and coordination skills through play-based activities have positively affected motor skill acquisition (Sugden & Wright, 2014). Furthermore, adaptive physical education programs that cater to individual needs can significantly improve motor skills, facilitating more significant participation in school and community activities (Alderman et al., 2020).

Hence, the literature review underscores the importance of understanding each developmental domain for LSENs. Focusing on cognitive, social-emotional, language, and motor skills, this study aims to provide a comprehensive view of the developmental milestones and the effectiveness of home intervention programs. Integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches will offer a holistic understanding of these learners' experiences and the impact of interventions, ultimately contributing to improved educational practices and outcomes.

Research Questions

This study aimed to measure the developmental milestones of learners with special education needs before the home intervention program and the developmental milestones of the learners with special education needs after the home intervention program. Further, this study aimed to determine the significant effect of the home intervention program on LSENs. This study shall also explore how the parents of LSENs perceive the effectiveness of the home intervention program. Specifically, this study has answered the following questions:

1. What is the level of the developmental milestones of the learners with special education needs before the home intervention program?
2. What is the level of the developmental milestones of the learners with special education needs after the home intervention program?
3. How do the parents perceive the effectiveness of the home intervention program?

METHODS

Research Design. This study adopted an embedded mixed-method research design to comprehensively evaluate the developmental milestones of learners with special education needs (LSENs) before and after the implementation of a home intervention program. The quantitative strand utilized a developmental milestone checklist and structured observations, while the qualitative strand employed semi-structured interviews with parents to gain insights into their experiences and perceptions of the intervention.

Sample Description and Recruitment. The study involved 16 LSENs enrolled in four public schools within District 7 of the Schools Division of Ozamiz City. The participants represented a diverse demographic, with ages ranging from 5 to 11 years. Diagnoses included Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Down Syndrome, and various Specific Learning Disabilities, classified into mild to moderate severity based on school records and prior assessments by special education professionals. A government school setting was purposefully chosen due to its access to underserved LSEN populations and active implementation of inclusive education programs, aligning with the study's objective to assess community-based intervention effectiveness. Inclusion criteria included LSENs enrolled in the school year 2024–2025, a confirmed diagnosis of developmental or cognitive disabilities, and the availability of at least one parent/caregiver willing to participate in the intervention and interviews. Exclusion criteria included LSENs with severe impairments requiring clinical-level interventions and families unable to commit to the duration of the intervention. Participants were identified through initial contact with school SPED coordinators. A snowball sampling strategy was subsequently employed, starting with five "seed" participants—families previously involved in similar school initiatives—who then referred other eligible families, ensuring a network of information-rich cases.

Intervention Program Detail. The Home Intervention Package was implemented over a period of 8 weeks, with a recommended frequency of 4–5 sessions per week, each lasting 15 to 45 minutes depending on activity type. Intervention components targeted the cognitive, social-emotional, language, motor, and self-help skills of

LSEnS. Activities included structured routines (e.g., puzzle games, story sequencing, role-playing, fine motor crafts), integrated into daily home life. The intervention was delivered primarily by parents or caregivers, who received orientation workshops and ongoing guidance from the researchers and trained SPED teachers. Regular bi-weekly check-ins were conducted to monitor fidelity and address implementation challenges. Parents documented progress through a developmental checklist and feedback forms.

Tool Validation and Reliability. The developmental milestone checklist was developed and validated specifically for this study. Content validity was established through expert review by three SPED specialists who assessed item relevance, clarity, and developmental appropriateness. Inter-rater reliability was confirmed via a pilot test involving five LSEnSs, yielding a Cohen's Kappa coefficient of 0.82, indicating strong agreement. Similarly, the interview guide underwent validation through a pilot interview with two parent participants and review by qualitative research experts. Revisions were made based on feedback to enhance clarity, neutrality, and relevance. The final tool was designed to capture meaningful insights aligned with the study's qualitative objectives.

Data Collection Protocol. Pre- and post-intervention assessments were conducted by the researcher in coordination with SPED teachers. To reduce bias, the assessors were not informed of each child's specific progress reports or parental feedback. Observations were guided by the validated checklist and conducted in natural home settings to ensure ecological validity. Interview sessions were held individually with available parents (both mothers and fathers when possible). In instances where only one parent was available, this was documented, and reflections on potential bias were included in the analysis. Interviews were conducted in the participants' preferred language (Cebuano or Filipino), with translation support provided as necessary by a trained bilingual facilitator with a background in SPED. Fidelity of implementation was ensured through parental training before intervention roll-out, monitoring logs and bi-weekly check-ins, and spot checks and follow-up support when inconsistencies were reported.

Qualitative Data Analysis. To analyze qualitative data, the study employed Moustakas' phenomenological approach to thematic analysis, which includes horizontalization (identifying significant statements), clustering themes, and constructing both textural and structural descriptions. This culminated in the formulation of the composite essence of parental experiences. Interview transcripts were reviewed iteratively, and meaningful statements were coded manually and grouped into thematic categories such as perceived benefits, implementation challenges, and suggestions for improvement. Multiple quotes were selected to support each theme and were contextually interpreted to preserve the richness of the parents' voices. This ensured not only thematic clarity but also an authentic portrayal of individual and shared experiences. Future sections of the manuscript integrate these findings with quantitative results to reflect the embedded nature of the mixed-method design, deepening interpretative coherence and enhancing explanatory insight.

Participants. This study focused on learners with special education needs (LSEnSs), comprising 16 participants. These LSEnSs were assessed using a developmental milestone checklist and observation notes, drawn from diverse backgrounds within the community. Their developmental milestones were evaluated across cognitive, language, social-emotional, and motor skill domains using quantitative methods, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of their progress before and after the home intervention program.

In addition to the LSEnSs, the study included 16 highly engaged parents who participated in semi-structured interviews. These parents provided valuable insights into their experiences and perceptions of the home intervention program, offering a rich qualitative perspective that complemented the quantitative data. Complete enumeration was employed to ensure that all parents of the LSEnSs in the study were included, capturing a broad range of opinions and experiences.

Setting. This study took place in four schools in the District 7, Schools Division of Ozamiz City Division. This area has many diverse people with different backgrounds. Each school is like a miniature version of the whole community. The study included participants from three schools selected based on specific criteria.

Research Tools. This section outlines the various tools and instruments utilized in the research process to collect and analyze data effectively. Each tool or instrument is carefully selected or developed to ensure suitability for

measuring the variables of interest and addressing the research objectives. This study utilized the following tools:

A. *Home Intervention Package (Appendix A).* It is a structured toolkit designed to enhance the developmental skills of children with special needs through targeted activities that engage parents and caregivers. It includes key components such as cognitive development activities like puzzles, memory games, and story sequencing, which promote problem-solving, memory recall, and narrative skills. Social-emotional development is supported through tools like emotion cards and role-playing scenarios that foster emotional awareness and social skills, alongside mindfulness exercises for self-regulation. Language development is encouraged through daily story time, sing-and-sign sessions, and picture journals that enhance vocabulary and communication skills.

B. Additionally, motor skills development is facilitated by engaging in obstacle courses and fine motor crafts, while daily living tasks promote independence. The package emphasizes parental involvement through workshops, resource guides, and regular check-ins to support the effective implementation of activities. To monitor progress, the package includes a checklist for ongoing assessment and feedback forms for parents to document their observations regarding their child's development. The Home Intervention Package supports LSEs' growth while fostering active parental engagement in their educational journey.

C. *Developmental Milestones, Checklist, and Observation Notes (Appendix B).* To determine the participants' pre- and post-assessments of skills and developmental needs before the home intervention program. This tool assessed participants' skills and developmental needs through pre- and post-assessments before and after the home intervention program. The checklist provided a structured way to evaluate key developmental areas, ensuring comprehensive data collection on cognitive, language, social-emotional, and motor skills.

D. *Interview Guide (Appendix C).* The semi-structured interview guide was designed to facilitate in-depth discussions with parents about their experiences and perceptions of the home intervention program. Open-ended questions encouraged parents to share insights regarding their children's development, interventions' effectiveness, and overall engagement in the process. This qualitative data complemented the quantitative findings from the developmental assessments.

These research tools collectively ensured a robust methodology for gathering relevant information, allowing for a thorough analysis of special education learners' developmental milestones and the impact of home interventions.

Data Collection. This section thoroughly elucidates the techniques employed to gather data for the study. Each data-gathering method is meticulously selected and implemented to ensure the comprehensive collection of relevant information about the research objectives. The researcher utilized the following data-gathering techniques in this study:

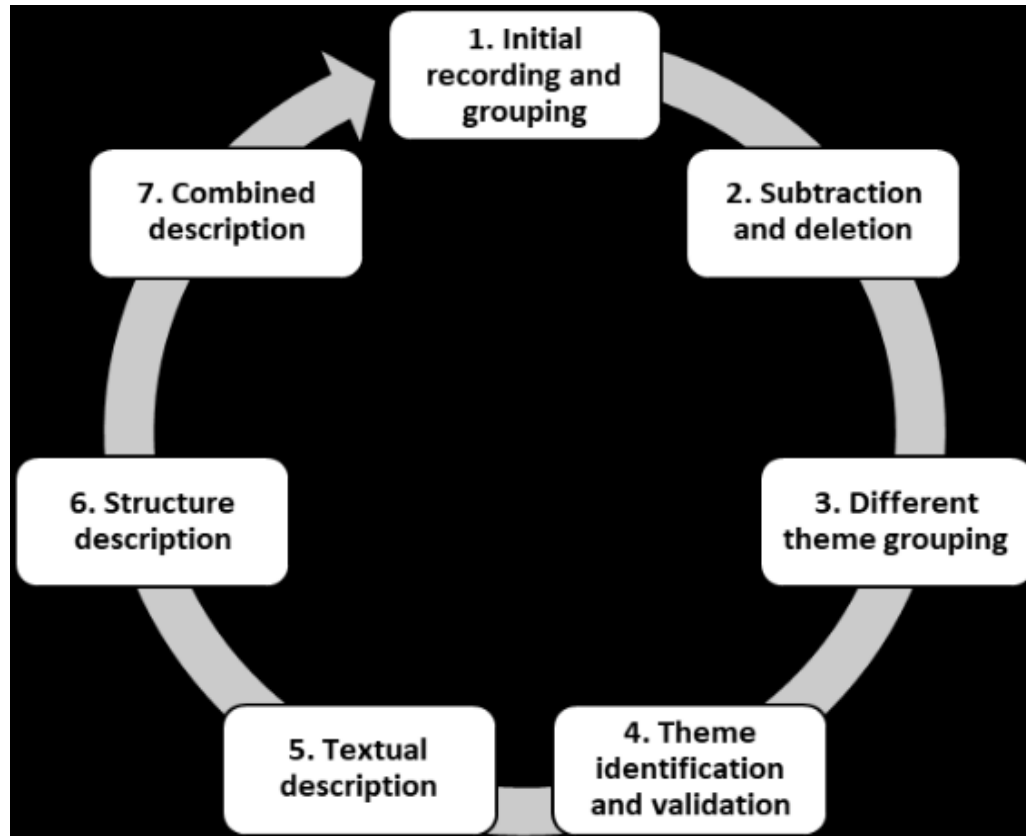
Pre- and Post-Assessment Observation. The researcher conducted observations before and after the intervention to assess participant behavior and skill changes. These assessments focused on specific behaviors or skills related to the research objectives, allowing the researcher to document improvements or challenges over time. Observations were structured using an observation checklist to ensure consistency and accuracy in data collection. The pre-assessment served as a baseline, while the post-assessment provided comparative data on the effects of the intervention or program.

One-on-One Interview. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the parents of the participants to gather qualitative data regarding their perspectives and experiences. These interviews aimed to explore parents' insights into their children's development, the effectiveness of the intervention, and their involvement in the process. The interviews were conducted individually with both mothers and fathers, where possible, ensuring comprehensive input from both parents. The questions were designed to be open-ended to encourage detailed responses, providing rich, in-depth data that complemented the observational findings.

Ethical Considerations. The researcher ensured ethical rigor throughout the study by obtaining informed consent from all participants and school administrators, clearly explaining the study's purpose, procedures, and any potential risks or benefits while allowing participants the freedom to decline or withdraw at any time.

Confidentiality and anonymity were safeguarded by securely storing personal data with restricted access and protecting participants' identities in all publications. The well-being of participants was prioritized, ensuring the study's interventions and recommendations aimed to benefit participants and advance educational outcomes without harm. Respect for participants' autonomy was upheld by encouraging questions, addressing concerns, and supporting informed decisions about participation. Additionally, the researcher adhered to ethical guidelines and legal regulations, complying with institutional review board standards and local laws governing research and data protection.

Data Analysis



In analyzing data on the developmental milestones of special education learners, the use of mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage provides a comprehensive view of their progress and developmental characteristics. The mean allows researchers to summarize key measures, such as the average age at which specific milestones are achieved, offering insights into general trends and expected timelines. The standard deviation measures the variability in achievement among learners, helping to identify consistency in reaching these milestones; a high standard deviation may indicate significant individual differences in development, which is common in special education contexts. Frequency counts how many learners achieve specific milestones, revealing common strengths and areas needing support. A percentage expresses these counts as a fraction of the total learners, making it easier for stakeholders to understand the proportion of learners reaching particular milestones.

The thematic analysis proposed by Moustakas was employed in the study to interpret the qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews with parents. This method focuses on understanding participants' lived experiences, allowing researchers to extract meaningful themes from their narratives (Moustakas, 1994). The analysis began with coding the interview transcripts to identify significant statements that reflected parents' perceptions of their children's developmental milestones and the effectiveness of home intervention programs. These codes were then organized into broader themes, such as parental engagement, perceived changes in developmental progress, and satisfaction with interventions. By utilizing Moustakas' approach, the study aimed to provide a rich, nuanced understanding of how parents perceive their roles and the impact of interventions on their children's development (Moustakas, 1994). This integration of qualitative insights enhances the overall validity and depth of the research, offering valuable implications for educational practices in special education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Developmental Milestones of the Learners with Special Education Needs

The data in Table 2 indicates overall positive growth in all developmental milestones for Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENs) after the Home Visitation Program, suggesting the program's effectiveness in fostering progress in key areas of development. These findings not only highlight the program's local impact but also resonate with a broader international body of research underscoring the value of early, family-centered intervention and parental involvement for children with special needs. This alignment with both global and local literature strengthens the case for such programs as essential components of inclusive education.

Communication Skills. There was a notable improvement in communication skills, with 10 LSENs showing progress in the pre-assessment compared to 14 in the post-assessment. Parents reported positive changes in their children's communication abilities, such as one mother sharing, "My daughter's communication skills have improved dramatically. She now uses full sentences to express her needs, which was not the case before." This improvement can be attributed to the program's focus on communication strategies and parents' daily application of these techniques. The data shows a marked improvement in communication skills, with 10 LSENs showing progress in the pre-assessment compared to 14 in the post-assessment. This is consistent with findings from other studies on early intervention programs, which emphasize the critical role of consistent, targeted communication strategies in improving speech and language development in children with special educational needs. Parent-reported improvements, such as one mother noting that her child now uses complete sentences to express her needs, echo the findings of research which demonstrated that when parents are trained to implement language-promoting strategies, children exhibit more advanced communication abilities. The daily application of these techniques, as mentioned by parents, is crucial, as studies show that the frequency and consistency of intervention directly correlate with progress in communication skills. These results are also supported by local studies in the Philippines, which emphasize that empowering parents as communication partners leads to more meaningful language gains and supports the inclusive education agenda. Furthermore, these findings reinforce the theoretical framework that early, consistent intervention—especially when delivered in the home environment—can accelerate language acquisition and social participation for LSENs.

Social Skills: Social skills showed the most remarkable improvement, with an increase from 4 children in the pre-assessment to 15 in the post-assessment. Parents noted significant changes, such as one saying, "My child used to be very shy. Since starting the program, he has made friends at school and even invites them over to play." Another shared, "I thought we would just work on academic skills, but the focus on social skills has been fantastic. My daughter has made new friends and feels more included at school." These improvements reflect the program's success in enhancing children's social interaction and confidence. Social skills showed the most remarkable improvement, increasing from 4 children in the pre-assessment to 15 in the post-assessment. This is supported by evidence from interventions focusing on improving social engagement and peer interactions in children with SEN. For instance, the work of international scholars emphasizes the importance of structured social skills training in enhancing peer relationships and social competence. The improvements reported by parents, such as children initiating playdates and interacting more confidently, are consistent with findings from similar programs. These interventions often use role-playing, social stories, and peer-mediated strategies to enhance social behaviors, suggesting that the Home Visitation Program's focus on these aspects may have contributed significantly to the observed growth. By providing parents with strategies to facilitate social interactions, the program appears to have effectively improved these children's social confidence and inclusion in school and social settings. This is in line with Philippine research advocating for collaborative school-family partnerships and inclusive practices, which have been shown to foster social confidence and inclusion in mainstream settings. Thus, the findings not only support but extend the evidence base for home-based social skills interventions in diverse educational contexts.

Self-Care: Self-care skills also showed moderate improvement, with 11 children in the pre-assessment compared to 13 in the post-assessment. A parent shared, "Before the program, my son struggled with basic self-care tasks. Now, he can dress himself and even help with simple chores like setting the table." This indicates that the program's practical life skills training has effectively encouraged children to develop greater independence in

self-care. Self-care skills also showed moderate improvement, with 11 children in the pre-assessment compared to 13 in the post-assessment. The reported ability of children to dress themselves and help with chores, as mentioned by a parent, reflects the importance of teaching practical life skills as part of a holistic developmental program. Research underscores the effectiveness of life skills training in fostering independence and self-sufficiency in children with developmental delays. Parent training programs focusing on daily routines and practical activities have been shown to yield positive outcomes in promoting self-care skills, as they consistently empower parents to reinforce these tasks in the home environment. The Home Visitation Program's emphasis on practical skill-building is key to this moderate but meaningful improvement. These results are consistent with both international and local studies that stress the importance of functional life skills as a foundation for lifelong independence and inclusion, particularly for LSENs.

Emotional Skills: Emotional regulation showed significant progress, with an increase from 10 children in the pre-assessment to 14 in the post-assessment. One parent commented, "The strategies we learned helped my daughter manage her anxiety better. She used to have meltdowns when faced with new situations, but now she approaches them more calmly." This suggests that the program effectively supported emotional development, helping children better manage their feelings and behaviors. Emotional regulation saw significant progress, increasing from 10 children in the pre-assessment to 14 post-assessment. Parents' feedback, such as one remarking that her daughter now approaches new situations more calmly, suggests that the program was successful in addressing emotional regulation. Studies indicate that early interventions targeting emotional and behavioral regulation significantly improve children's ability to manage stress and anxiety. The strategies provided by the Home Visitation Program likely included techniques such as mindfulness, emotional coaching, and stress management, all of which have been proven to enhance emotional resilience in children with SEN. The positive changes in emotional regulation reported by parents confirm the program's efficacy in this area, reinforcing the importance of integrating emotional development into early intervention strategies. Locally, this supports the growing emphasis in Philippine special education policy on the holistic development of LSENs, including emotional and behavioral domains, and suggests that parent-led interventions can be a powerful complement to school-based programs.

Cognitive Skills: Cognitive skills showed moderate improvement, with four children progressing in the pre-assessment compared to 7 in the post-assessment. While the growth in this area was not as dramatic as in other milestones, parents observed progress, although some felt it was slower than expected. As one parent mentioned, "I expected quicker results. While there have been improvements, they have been slower than I hoped." This feedback suggests that cognitive development may require more time and consistency for noticeable gains. Cognitive skills showed moderate improvement, with four children progressing in the pre-assessment compared to 7 in the post-assessment. While this improvement was not as dramatic as in communication or social skills, it still signifies a positive shift. Cognitive development in children with SEN often requires more sustained, individualized intervention. Parent feedback that improvements were slower than expected aligns with research indicating that cognitive growth in children with developmental delays can be a gradual process that requires more intensive and long-term support. Additionally, cognitive development may be influenced by the child's baseline developmental stage, which could explain the slower progress in this area. However, the slight but notable increase in cognitive skills suggests that the program's activities, such as cognitive games and problem-solving tasks, were beneficial. These findings are consistent with international evidence that cognitive gains, while sometimes slower, are achievable with persistent, targeted intervention, and they highlight the need for continuous support and adaptation of strategies to individual needs.

Motor Skills: Motor skills exhibited slight improvement, with three children in the pre-assessment compared to 5 in the post-assessment. Parents expressed concerns about maintaining consistency due to busy schedules, which might have impacted motor skill development. One parent stated, "It's hard to consistently implement the program with our busy schedules. We sometimes skip days, and I worry it affects progress." This highlights the potential need for more structured physical activities to facilitate further improvement in motor skills. Motor skills showed slight improvement, with three children in the pre-assessment compared to 5 in the post-assessment. The moderate progress in motor development aligns with existing research that highlights the challenges children with SEN face in acquiring motor skills, often requiring specialized, consistent physical activities. Parents' concerns about the impact of inconsistent program implementation due to busy schedules are

echoed in studies emphasizing the importance of regular physical activity for children's motor skill development. The Home Visitation Program's impact on motor skills may have been constrained by these scheduling challenges, suggesting that more structured and frequent physical activities may be necessary to foster more significant improvements. This is also reflected in local research, which points to the need for accessible and family-friendly motor development resources for LSENs.

Independence. The number of children exhibiting signs of independence increased modestly from 2 in the pre-assessment to 4 in the post-assessment. Parents acknowledged that the program's family-centered approach positively impacted their children's independence, with one parent saying, "I've started using the techniques daily, and it's created a stronger bond between me and my child. We work as a team now." This suggests that the collaborative efforts between parents and children have contributed to fostering a sense of independence in daily tasks. The number of children exhibiting signs of independence increased modestly from 2 in the pre-assessment to 4 in the post-assessment. This increase highlights the importance of fostering independence as a developmental goal, particularly in children with SEN. Research shows that family-centered interventions, such as the Home Visitation Program, promote independence by encouraging collaborative efforts between parents and children. The parent-reported changes, such as increased collaboration and a stronger bond, align with findings suggesting that children with SEN benefit from programs emphasizing family involvement and reinforcing skills in daily routines. By empowering parents to work closely with their children, the program has likely contributed to a modest but positive shift towards greater independence in daily activities, supporting the broader literature on the importance of autonomy and self-determination for LSENs.

Table 2 Pre- and Post-Assessment Results of the Developmental Milestones of LSENs (n = 16)

Milestones	Results	
	Pre-Assessment	Post-Assessment
Communication Skill	10 (62.50%)	14 (87.5%)
Social Skill	4 (25. 0%)	15 (93.8%)
Self-Care	11 (68.8 %)	13 (81.3 %)
Emotional	10 (62.5 %)	14 (87.5 %)
Cognitive	4 (25.0 %)	7 (43.8%)
Motor	3 (18.8%)	5 (31.3 %)
Independence	2 (12.5%)	4 (25.0%)

The number of children exhibiting signs of independence increased modestly from 2 in the pre-assessment to 4 in the post-assessment. This increase highlights the importance of fostering independence as a developmental goal, particularly in children with SEN. Research by Odom et al. (2004) shows that family-centered interventions, such as the Home Visitation Program, promote independence by encouraging collaborative efforts between parents and children. The parent-reported changes, such as increased collaboration and a stronger bond, align with findings suggesting that children with SEN benefit from programs emphasizing family involvement and reinforcing skills in daily routines (Dunst et al., 2011). By empowering parents to work closely with their children, the program has likely contributed to a modest but positive shift towards greater independence in daily activities.

Challenges and Areas for Improvement

Lack of Ongoing Support. Despite the overall positive outcomes observed in the Home Visitation Program, parents highlighted several challenges and areas for improvement in the interviews. One significant challenge was the need for follow-up. Many parents expressed frustration with the lack of ongoing support after the initial sessions, indicating they felt somewhat abandoned once the initial training was completed. One parent mentioned, "After the initial sessions, I felt somewhat abandoned. I expected more ongoing support and feedback." Another parent echoed this sentiment, stating, "I wish there were more resources available. Some

techniques felt too advanced for me to implement effectively at home without additional support." This suggests that while the program introduced effective strategies, there may be a need for continued engagement and guidance to ensure that parents feel confident and supported in applying these techniques over time. This challenge is consistent with literature that emphasizes the necessity of sustained support and regular follow-ups for the long-term success of home-based intervention programs. International and local studies alike highlight that ongoing coaching, feedback, and opportunities for parent networking are critical for the sustainability and effectiveness of early intervention.

Inconsistent Implementation of Program Strategies. Another challenge faced by parents was inconsistent implementation of the program's strategies. Due to busy family schedules, some parents found it challenging to maintain the necessary consistency, which may have hindered further progress. One parent shared, "With our busy schedules, it's hard to practice the strategies consistently." This speaks to the reality of balancing multiple responsibilities, which can sometimes interfere with the consistency needed for developmental milestones to progress more rapidly. Therefore, it may be beneficial to introduce more flexible implementation strategies or find ways to integrate the program into parents' daily routines. This finding is echoed in the literature, which notes that flexibility and adaptability are key to successful home-based interventions, especially for families with multiple demands. Research suggests that integrating intervention strategies into existing routines and providing parents with time-management support can improve consistency and outcomes.

The Need for Clearer Materials. Lastly, several parents mentioned the need for more transparent materials. Although the program provided resources, some parents felt that they were insufficient or unclear, making it harder to apply the strategies effectively at home. One parent suggested, "It would be great to have a comprehensive toolkit that includes worksheets, visual aids, and examples of activities." The absence of explicit, user-friendly materials or digital resources could contribute to confusion and potentially undermine the program's effectiveness. Providing more structured and easily accessible materials, such as digital resources or visual aids, could significantly enhance parents' ability to implement the strategies in a manageable and impactful way. This would ensure that the program's benefits are maximized and more consistently integrated into daily life. The literature supports the need for comprehensive, culturally relevant toolkits that are accessible to families of diverse backgrounds, and suggests that digital resources and visual supports can bridge gaps in understanding and implementation.

Limitations and Future Directions. It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The small sample size and localized setting limit the generalizability of the findings, as the outcomes may not fully represent the diversity of LSENs across different regions, socioeconomic backgrounds, or types of disabilities. The reliance on parent-reported data introduces potential bias, and the absence of a control group makes it difficult to attribute changes solely to the intervention. These limitations highlight the need for caution in interpreting the results and suggest that future research should involve larger, more diverse samples, comparative studies across different regions or school types, and the inclusion of objective assessment tools and longitudinal follow-up to better understand long-term effects.

Policy and Practice Implications. The findings of this study have several implications for policy and practice. The Department of Education could develop and mandate a standardized Home Intervention Package for LSENs, ensuring it includes clear, user-friendly materials such as worksheets, visual aids, and activity guides. These toolkits should be adaptable for various developmental domains and disability types and made available in both print and digital formats for accessibility. Local government units could allocate funding for regular follow-up visits and ongoing parent training sessions, possibly through scheduled home visits by trained special education teachers or therapists, as well as the establishment of community-based support groups for parents. Special Education Centers could implement structured monitoring and feedback mechanisms, such as monthly check-ins (in-person or virtual) and progress tracking forms, and offer workshops to help parents integrate intervention strategies into daily routines. To ensure sustainability, programs should leverage existing community resources, such as barangay health workers or parent volunteers, and explore partnerships with NGOs for funding and technical support. Digital platforms can also be utilized to reduce costs and increase reach, especially in remote areas. A comprehensive toolkit should include step-by-step guides for parents, sample activity schedules, visual supports for routines, video demonstrations, and a troubleshooting FAQ, all tailored to be culturally relevant and accessible in local languages. Considering cost-effectiveness and sustainability, these recommendations can help

ensure that home-based intervention programs are scalable and impactful across diverse communities.

Future Research Directions. Looking forward, several avenues for future research emerge from this study. It would be valuable to investigate which specific components of the Home Intervention Package are most effective for different developmental domains, and how outcomes vary for LSENs with different types of disabilities. Long-term studies could examine the sustained effects of home-based interventions on academic achievement, social integration, and independence. Additionally, research could explore how the frequency and mode of follow-up (in-person versus virtual) impact parent engagement and child outcomes, as well as the cost-effectiveness of home visitation programs compared to center-based or hybrid models. Addressing these questions will help inform the development of more targeted, scalable, and sustainable interventions for LSENs, ultimately supporting their inclusion and success in both educational and community settings.

Findings

The analysis of the data yielded the following salient findings:

1. Before the Home Visitation Program, LSENs showed varied progress across developmental milestones. Communication skills were relatively better, with 10 children showing progress. Social and emotional skills were more limited, with only 4 and 10 children demonstrating improvement, respectively. Cognitive and motor skills were the lowest, with just 4 and 3 children showing progress, while independence was also a challenge, with only two children exhibiting increased independence.
2. After the program, there were significant improvements across all developmental milestones. Social skills saw the most significant improvement, rising from 4 to 15 children. Communication skills followed, improving from 10 to 14 children. Emotional skills and self-care skills also showed marked progress. Cognitive skills showed moderate improvement, while motor skills and independence saw slight to modest increases.
3. Parents reported positive outcomes, particularly in communication and social skills, with many noting increased confidence in their children. However, they also highlighted the need for follow-up support and more transparent materials. Several parents expressed difficulty maintaining consistent implementation due to busy schedules, suggesting additional resources and ongoing guidance could further enhance the program's effectiveness.

Reflections

This study highlights the effectiveness of the Home Visitation Program on the developmental milestones of LSENs, especially in areas like communication and social skills. As a researcher, observing the positive changes in children's progress was rewarding, which validated the program's effectiveness in fostering growth in critical areas. However, the challenges identified by parents, particularly in terms of follow-up support, consistent implementation, and the need for more transparent materials, shed light on areas for improvement. These insights reinforce the importance of providing comprehensive, sustained support to families, ensuring that the program's positive effects are fully realized. Further refinement of the program's resources and structure could contribute to even greater success in helping LSENs reach their full developmental potential.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Schools Division SNED Coordinator is encouraged to establish consistent follow-up with parents for ongoing support and monitor the implementation of strategies at home. Resources like comprehensive toolkits with worksheets and visual aids can help parents apply the program more effectively. Professional development workshops for teachers will ensure they are equipped to support the program.
2. The SNED teachers must collaborate closely with parents, offering clear guidance on applying strategies at home. It is crucial to regularly monitor student progress and adjust strategies to meet individual needs. Active communication with parents and feedback will reinforce progress.
3. The SNED Implementing Schools can strengthen collaboration with families by offering workshops and

check-ins to support the home intervention program. Organizing training sessions for parents will help them better understand and consistently apply the program. Schools may also consider digital platforms for easy access to materials.

4. Parents are encouraged to consistently apply strategies at home to maximize progress. Sharing feedback with teachers about progress and challenges will help tailor the program to their child's needs. If needed, reaching out for additional support will enhance the program's effectiveness.

5. Future research could explore the long-term effects of home intervention programs on LSENs' development. Investigating the challenges parents face in implementation may lead to practical solutions. Expanding research across diverse educational settings will assess the generalizability of the program's effectiveness.

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APPENDIX A

Home Intervention Package for Learners with Special Education Needs (LSENs)

Component	Activity/ Strategy	Description	Responsible Person	Timeline
Cognitive Development	Puzzle Time	Engage with age-appropriate puzzles to enhance problem-solving and critical thinking skills.	Parent/ Caregiver	Daily (15-20 mins)
	Memory Games	Use memory card games with familiar images to improve memory and recall abilities.	Parent/ Caregiver	3 times a week (15 mins)
	Story Sequencing	Arrange pictures from a familiar story to promote narrative understanding and cognitive skills.	Parent/ Caregiver	Weekly (30 mins)
Social- Emotional Development	Emotion Cards	Create cards with facial expressions to discuss emotions and foster emotional awareness.	Parent/ Caregiver	Weekly (20 mins)
	Role-Playing	Practice social interactions through role-playing scenarios to develop social skills.	Parent/ Caregiver	2 times a week (20 mins)
	Mindfulness Activities	Introduce simple mindfulness exercises to help the child learn self-regulation and coping strategies.	Parent/ Caregiver	Daily (10 mins)
Language Development	Storytime	Read together daily, asking open-ended questions to stimulate discussion and language comprehension.	Parent/ Caregiver	Daily (20-30 mins)
	Sing and Sign	Use songs with gestures or sign language to enhance vocabulary and kinesthetic learning.	Parent/ Caregiver	3 times a week (15 mins)
	Picture Journals	Create a journal for the child to draw or paste pictures, describing them verbally or in writing.	Parent/ Caregiver	Weekly (30 mins)
Motor Skills Development	Obstacle Course	Set up a safe obstacle course to encourage gross motor skills through crawling, jumping, and balancing.	Parent/ Caregiver	Weekly (30 mins)
	Fine Motor Crafts	Engage in crafts that require cutting, gluing, and coloring to enhance fine motor skills.	Parent/ Caregiver	2 times a week (30 mins)
	Daily Living Skills	Involve the child in chores like setting the table to promote independence and practical motor skills.	Parent/ Caregiver	Daily (15 mins)

Parental Involvement and Training	Workshops	Conduct workshops to train parents on implementing activities and encouraging engagement.	Parent/ Caregiver	Monthly (2 hours)
	Resource Guides	Provide guides with detailed descriptions of activities, expected outcomes, and adaptation tips.	Parent/ Caregiver	At the start of the program
	Regular Check-ins	Schedule regular check-ins to discuss progress and adjust strategies as needed.	Parent/ Caregiver	Bi-weekly (30 mins)
Monitoring Progress	Developmental Milestone Checklist	Offer a checklist for parents to monitor their child's progress across developmental areas.	Parent/ Caregiver	Ongoing
	Feedback Forms	Include forms for parents to report engagement, challenges, and observed changes in skills.	Parent/ Caregiver	After each activity
Language Development	Storytime	Read together daily, asking open-ended questions to stimulate discussion and language comprehension.	Parent/ Caregiver	Daily (20-30 mins)
	Sing and Sign	Use songs with gestures or sign language to enhance vocabulary and kinesthetic learning.	Parent/ Caregiver	3 times a week (15 mins)
	Picture Journals	Create a journal for the child to draw or paste pictures, describing them verbally or in writing.	Parent/ Caregiver	Weekly (30 mins)
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	Feedback Forms	Include forms for parents to report engagement, challenges, and observed changes in skills.	Parent/Caregiver	After each activity

APPENDIX B

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Introduction

- Greet the participant and provide a brief introduction about the purpose of the interview.
- Explain the confidentiality of their responses and obtain verbal or written consent to proceed.
- Encourage honesty and assure them that there are no right or wrong answers.
- Confirm that the participant can decline to answer any question or stop the interview anytime.

Opening Questions

1. How will you describe the family's experience with the home intervention program of your child?

Core Questions

2. How do you describe the effectiveness of the home intervention program in your child's development? Can you provide specific examples?

3. In what ways has the home intervention program met or not met your expectations for your child's development?

4. Have you encountered any challenges in using the home intervention program? How do these challenges affect your perception of its overall effectiveness?

5. Do you have any suggestions to improve the home intervention program? What additional resources or support do you think would enhance the program's effectiveness?

Closing Question

6. Overall, how satisfied are you with the program? Do you like to recommend this program to other parents? Why or why not?

Conclusion

- Thank the participant for their time and insights.
- Reiterate how their responses will contribute to understanding and improving the school environment.
- Provide an opportunity for the participant to ask questions or seek clarification on any aspect of the interview.

APPENDIX C

Anecdotal Record And Abc Observation

Activity Observed	Child #1	Child #2	Child #3	Child #4	Child #5
Cognitive Development * Puzzle Time * Memory Games * Story Sequencing	A	B	C	D	E
Social-Emotional Development * Emotion Cards * Role-Playing * Mindfulness Activities					
Language Development * Storytime * Sing and Sign * Picture Journals					
Motor Skills Development * Obstacle Course * Fine Motor Crafts * Daily Living Skills					

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Form

Name of Principal Investigator	Jenny Babe B. Pacaldo
Name of the College	Northwestern Mindanao State College of Science and Technology
Name of Sponsor (if applicable)	
Name of Project and Version	Describing the Special Education Learners' Developmental Milestone: An Embedded Mixed-Method Study

Part I: Information Sheet

Introduction

I, Jenny Babe B. Pacaldo, am a second-year student at Northwestern Mindanao State College of Science and Technology, taking a PhD in Education—Curriculum Development and Instructional Design. One of the requirements of our course in PHD305—Advanced Mixed-Methods Research is to conduct a mixed-method study on Describing the Special Education Learners' Developmental Milestone: An Embedded Mixed-Method Study. You are invited to participate in this study. Participation in this study is voluntary, and details will be discussed further in the subsequent sections of this document.

Purpose Of The Research

This embedded mixed-method study aims to describe the developmental milestones of learners with special

needs before and after implementing a home intervention program. By employing a mixed-method approach, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of home interventions on the developmental progress of children with special needs. This research aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by exploring the specific challenges of parents with children with special needs. By examining the intersectional experiences of these parents, this study hopes to provide insights into the policies and interventions that can effectively address these and promote the empowerment of LSENs.

One's Participation and Methods of Data Collection

During the data collection, you will be invited to participate in the study by answering interview guides. The one-on-one interview will last about an hour and will be recorded so that no information will be missed when transcribing the answers.

Participant Selection

The study will involve parents who have children with special needs. As a parent with special needs, you are chosen as one of the potential participants who can share your experiences of describing the effectiveness of the home intervention program. The participants are chosen according to specific criteria to ensure their relevance to the study:

1. Parents who have child/children with special needs enrolled in school year 2024-2025 of Ozamiz City Division
2. Gender and Civil Status: Both male and female, married or living-in-with-common-law-partner women are eligible to participate in the study;
3. Educational Attainment: Participants must be at least elementary graduate;
4. Experience with bias: Participants must have experienced or witnessed the effectiveness of the home intervention program
5. Employment Status: Participants working, having work experience, or having no work can be eligible to participate in the study.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without providing a reason, without any negative consequences, and without affecting your relationship with the researchers or the educational institution.

Confidentiality

All information taken from the study will be coded to protect each participant's name. No names or other identifying information will be used when discussing or reporting data. The investigator will safely keep all files and data collected in a secured locked cabinet. Once the data has been thoroughly analyzed, it will be destroyed. The findings will be presented in aggregated form so no individuals may be identified. Participants may be sure their contributions will be kept strictly secret and respected throughout the study.

Risks

While participating in this study, it is important to be aware of the potential risks involved:

Emotional discomfort: Discussing your challenges and experiences of being discriminated against as a parent of a child/ children with special needs can be emotionally challenging and bring up feelings of sadness, anger, or frustration.

Trigger Risks: Recalling and discussing past experiences of bias may trigger negative emotions or memories.

Physical Risks: While minimal, prolonged engagement in the study activities could lead to fatigue or stress.

Fear of judgment or stigma: Participants might worry about being judged by others in the community for speaking out about bias.

If you feel uncomfortable at any time during the interviews or observations, you have the right to withdraw without any negative consequences. We can connect you to NMSC guidance counselors for a debriefing session after participation to allow you to ask questions and express any lingering concerns.

Benefits and Reward

Your participation in the study helps advance knowledge related to the study, specifically in understanding the experiences of being a parent of a child with special needs. You will be contributing to progress and potentially impacting future discoveries. You will be encouraged to think critically about the research questions, which can strengthen your ability to evaluate information and form your own opinions. There will be no monetary reward or compensation for your participation. However, you will provide valuable data and insights to shape the research conclusions.

Procedures

The following protocols shall be observed during the data collection process.

1. **Orientation and Informed Consent.** The researchers will conduct a brief orientation with you on how the data collection will be done. If you agree, you will be given an informed consent form to complete and sign.
2. **Interview.**
 - a. You and the researchers will agree on the time and place where the interview will take place. You will be interviewed at your most convenient time and comfortable place. The interview will last for about an hour.
 - b. You will decide if you agree to use a voice recorder during the interview to capture your answers and ensure that no important details will be missed.
 - c. After the interview, the researchers will transcribe your answers and give you the script for validation. After your validation, the data will be utilized for analysis.

During the interview, you will be asked the following interview questions:

Research Questions	Interview Questions
How do the parents perceive the effectiveness of the home intervention program?	
Opening Question	1. How will you describe the family's experience with the home intervention program of your child?
Core Questions	2. How do you describe the effectiveness of the home intervention program in your child's development? Can you provide specific examples? 3. In what ways has the home intervention program met or not met your expectations for your child's development?

	<p>4. Have you encountered any challenges in using the home intervention program? How do these challenges affect your perception of its overall effectiveness?</p> <p>5. Do you have any suggestions to improve the home intervention program? What additional resources or support would enhance the program's effectiveness?</p>
Closing Question	Overall, how satisfied are you with the program? Do you like to recommend this program to other parents? Why or why not?

1. Observation. The researcher will visit you during a community engagement, including purok or barangay meetings, parent-teacher meetings, etc. The researcher will also do observations at your home. These will help the researcher collect firsthand information that you may not be able to express in words during the interview. During the observation, the researcher will take field notes to avoid missing information. Before the conduct of the observation, the researcher will secure a permit from the barangay/purok or school leaders (whichever is applicable). Once the permit is sought, the observation will be scheduled for a date and time.

Who To Contact

Do not sign or agree to participate if you are unsure or have remaining questions. Please ask the investigator to explain anything unclear, including any words in this form.

Jenny Babe B. Pacaldo – 09703835988 – Email: jennybababe.pacaldo@deped.gov.ph

DR. JOEL T. ACLAO

September 12, 2024

Professor, Advanced Mixed-Methods

Date

Part II: Statement of Consent


Statement By The Researcher Securing Informed Consent

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my ability, made sure that the participant understands that the following will be done:

1. Interviews
2. Observation

I confirm that the participant was allowed to ask questions about the study, and all questions have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been provided to the participant.

Print Name of the Researcher Facilitating the Consent Form	Jenny Babe B. Pacaldo
Signature of Researcher Facilitating the Consent Form	
Date:	

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CONSENT of Participant/Respondent

This study described to you in the informed consent document was approved by the Ethical Review Committee of the Northwestern Mindanao State College of Science and Technology. After thoroughly reading and understanding the provisions set for your participation in this study and wishing to participate voluntarily, please sign below. You may request a copy of the informed consent for your reference or cut the above segment (The Informed Consent section) and send the Consent of Participant/Respondent section to the researcher.

Describing the Special Education Learners' Developmental Milestone: An Embedded Mixed-Method Study



Jenny Babe B. Pacaldo

June 24, 2024

Name of Principal Investigator and Signature

Date