

# Understanding Teachers' Experiences Supporting Students with ADHD-Related Behaviors: A Social and Cultural Perspective

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## Abstract

This study explores the perspectives and experiences of five Filipino teachers in supporting students who exhibit characteristics of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) within general education classrooms. Using a qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted, and findings were synthesized through cross-case thematic analysis. Results reveal that teachers navigate social, relational, and cultural challenges by employing strategies such as structured discussions, collaboration with families, positive reinforcement, support staff involvement, and cooperative learning. These practices highlight the broader social and cultural role of teachers in mediating inclusion, fostering community, and addressing social-emotional needs within classrooms. The study underscores the importance of teacher initiative, empathy, and culturally informed decision-making in supporting diverse learners, illustrating how classroom practices intersect with broader societal norms and expectations.

**Keywords:** ADHD, inclusive education, classroom community, social-emotional support, cultural context, teacher perspectives

## 1. Introduction

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental condition characterized by persistent patterns of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity that affect functioning across multiple social and institutional contexts (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Symptoms often become particularly visible in classroom interactions, where expectations for attention, self-regulation, and peer collaboration are heightened. While many students receive diagnoses before adolescence, a significant proportion remain unrecognized due to limited access to clinical assessments, cultural perceptions of behavior, or lack of awareness among families and educators (Polanczyk et al., 2014; Thomas et al., 2015). In the Philippine context, cultural norms frequently interpret hyperactivity or inattentiveness as misbehavior or lack of discipline, creating social stigma that can delay recognition and support (DepEd, 2019).

Globally, ADHD affects approximately 5–7% of school-aged children (Polanczyk et al., 2014). Students with ADHD may experience challenges with attention, organization, behavioral regulation, and task completion, which can impact social relationships, academic participation, and broader psychosocial development (DuPaul & Stoner, 2020; Barkley, 2022). In local classrooms, these challenges manifest as frequent movement between activities, impulsive speech, or difficulty following group norms—behaviors that can affect peer interactions and classroom cohesion. Teachers in public schools, often managing large classes with limited resources, navigate these challenges by balancing individual and group needs. For example, a Grade 10 teacher in a provincial Philippine school may mediate peer conflicts arising from a student's impulsive behavior while also maintaining classroom order.

Inclusive education emphasizes equity, belonging, and active participation for all learners. International policy

frameworks highlight the need to dismantle structural and social barriers to participation (UNESCO, 2020). Within the Philippine system, initiatives such as the Department of Education's "Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs" encourage culturally sensitive approaches, differentiated instruction, and collaboration with families and support personnel (DepEd, 2019). Students with ADHD are particularly vulnerable to peer exclusion, misinterpretation of behavior, and labeling as "troublesome," making teacher awareness and deliberate social strategies critical (Mikami & Normand, 2015).

In practice, Filipino teachers enact locally adapted strategies that address both educational and social dimensions of ADHD. These include assigning patient or focused peer partners to model appropriate classroom behavior, using visual schedules and movement breaks, integrating cooperative learning activities, and coordinating with families via mobile communication platforms. Such approaches highlight how teachers function as cultural mediators, negotiating societal norms, classroom expectations, and individual student needs.

This study investigates how five teachers in the Philippines perceive and respond to ADHD-related behaviors, exploring the social, relational, and cultural practices that foster inclusion, peer engagement, and academic participation. By examining locally situated strategies within an international framework of inclusive education, the research contributes to understanding ADHD as a sociocultural as well as educational phenomenon.

## **2. Review of Relate Literature**

### *2.1 Teacher–Student Relationships*

Strong relational ties between teachers and students are foundational for supporting students with ADHD, influencing engagement, behavioral regulation, and emotional well-being (Ewe, 2019; Longobardi et al., 2020). Beyond academic support, teacher–student relationships mediate social norms and classroom expectations, providing a framework for students to navigate both learning and social challenges.

In Philippine classrooms, where class sizes often exceed 40 students, these relationships are crucial. Teachers frequently rely on informal conversations, daily check-ins, and culturally meaningful gestures—such as praise in the local language or small tokens of recognition—to build rapport. For instance, a Grade 10 teacher in a public high school may use nicknames or culturally resonant anecdotes to connect with students exhibiting ADHD-related behaviors, thereby reinforcing classroom norms and establishing trust. These relational strategies are not only emotional supports but also mechanisms for managing behavior, encouraging participation, and reducing peer stigma.

Understanding teacher–student relationships allows the study to examine how relational practices underpin strategies for engagement and inclusion (Maslang et al., 2021). Insights into these dynamics highlight the social and cultural dimensions of ADHD support in local classrooms.

### *2.2 Classroom Management Strategies*

Evidence-based strategies such as structured routines, visual cues, chunked tasks, clear behavioral expectations, and strategic seating facilitate attention, reduce disruptions, and shape social interactions (DuPaul et al., 2018; Anastopoulos & Shelton, 2020; Meza et al., 2020). In crowded Philippine classrooms, these strategies are especially critical for balancing the needs of individual students while maintaining overall classroom cohesion.

For example, teachers may post visual schedules in Tagalog or English to guide transitions between activities, or use color-coded task boards to help students prioritize assignments. During lessons, movement breaks or short group discussions may be integrated to manage hyperactivity while keeping students engaged. A Filipino teacher might also pair students with ADHD with highly focused peers during seatwork to scaffold attention and reduce task-related anxiety. These context-specific adaptations demonstrate how evidence-based strategies can be tailored to local conditions, including resource constraints and cultural expectations around authority, discipline, and classroom order.

Examining classroom management strategies illuminates how teachers operationalize inclusive practices and address the cognitive, behavioral, and social needs of students with ADHD. It links instructional design to the study's goal of identifying practical, culturally relevant interventions.

### *2.3 Parent–Teacher Collaboration*

Family engagement is essential for reinforcing consistent expectations and behavioral norms across school and home environments (Kraft & Dougherty, 2013; Sheridan et al., 2019). In the Philippines, teachers frequently communicate with parents through text messaging, mobile apps, and social media platforms such as Messenger or Viber, reflecting culturally embedded communication practices.

For example, a teacher may send daily updates about a student's task completion or social interactions, providing guidance on home-based reinforcement strategies. Filipino parents, who often value relational and reciprocal approaches, may offer feedback or cultural insights that influence classroom interventions. Teachers may also

organize informal “coffee sessions” or parent meetings during school events to foster collaboration, illustrating how local social norms shape engagement strategies.

Understanding parent–teacher collaboration reveals how teachers integrate family and community resources to support inclusion. This aligns with the study’s objective of exploring relational and contextual strategies that enhance student participation and socio-emotional development.

#### *2.4 Peer-Mediated and Collaborative Learning*

Structured peer interactions, cooperative learning, and group tasks support inclusion and model adaptive behaviors for students with ADHD (Mikami et al., 2020). Positive peer role models reduce stigma and encourage social competence, complementing teacher-led strategies.

In Filipino classrooms, peer-mediated strategies are often adapted to local values of *pakikisama* (social harmony) and *bayanihan* (community cooperation). Teachers may intentionally assign group partners who can scaffold attention or promote patience during tasks. For instance, a student prone to impulsivity may be paired with a calm peer to model self-regulation during reading or science experiments. Teachers may also design cooperative projects where diverse abilities are valued, reinforcing inclusive norms while enhancing academic engagement. These culturally grounded peer interactions highlight the social dimensions of classroom management, extending the teacher’s role as both facilitator and mediator (Ognase & Maslang, 2024).

Peer-mediated practices help explain how teachers operationalize inclusion through social structures, complementing the study’s focus on relational and instructional strategies.

#### *2.5 School-Wide Inclusion and Multidisciplinary Support*

Inclusive classrooms require coordinated support from teachers, administrators, counselors, and other personnel (Ahsan & Sharma, 2020; Florian, 2021). In the Philippine setting, the Department of Education promotes initiatives such as the “Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs” program, which encourages collaboration across classrooms and grades. Teachers may work alongside guidance counselors to monitor students’ social-emotional needs, or with educational assistants to provide individualized support during high-stakes activities like examinations.

Cultural factors, such as respect for hierarchy and collective decision-making, often shape multidisciplinary interactions. Filipino teachers may seek advice from senior colleagues or participate in collaborative planning sessions to ensure strategies align with school-wide norms, illustrating how broader community structures influence classroom practice.

Examining school-wide collaboration highlights the structural and social supports that enable teachers to implement inclusive strategies (Serafica et al., 2023). It connects micro-level classroom interventions to broader institutional and policy frameworks.

#### *2.6 Teacher Preparedness and Professional Development*

Despite available resources, many teachers report feeling underprepared to support students with ADHD (Meza et al., 2020). Professional development focused on neurodiversity, inclusive pedagogy, and culturally responsive strategies equips teachers with practical and relational skills necessary for effective classroom management.

In practice, Filipino teachers may attend workshops on differentiated instruction, behavioral interventions, or the use of educational technology to support learners with ADHD. These trainings improve teachers’ confidence, encourage reflection on culturally sensitive strategies, and enhance classroom climate. For example, a teacher trained in inclusive pedagogy might design activities that simultaneously accommodate attention difficulties, respect Filipino learning preferences, and foster collaboration.

Teacher preparedness directly informs the study’s exploration of classroom practices. Understanding the interplay between training, cultural knowledge, and strategy implementation provides insights into how effective support for ADHD students is achieved in locally and socially grounded ways.

#### *2.7 Synthesis*

Across relational, instructional, social, and institutional domains, these literature themes illustrate how teachers support students with ADHD in ways that are both evidence-informed and culturally situated. Strong teacher–student relationships, structured classroom management, parent engagement, peer-mediated learning, school-wide collaboration, and professional development collectively provide a comprehensive framework for inclusive practices. Integrating these insights into the study’s objectives allows for an in-depth exploration of how Filipino teachers operationalize inclusion, navigate local constraints, and foster socially and academically supportive classrooms for students with ADHD-related behaviors.

### **3. Methodology**

### 3.1 Research Design

This qualitative study examined how teachers construct inclusive classroom communities that support students exhibiting ADHD-related behaviors, focusing on instructional, social, and relational strategies.

### 3.2 Participants

Five senior high school teachers were selected via purposive sampling with criteria:

- 1) Minimum three years of teaching experience
- 2) Direct experience supporting students with ADHD-related behaviors

### 3.3 Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews lasting 30–45 minutes were conducted, addressing instructional strategies, classroom management, collaborative practices, and perceptions of student needs. Informed consent ensured voluntary participation and confidentiality.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic coding. Recurrent patterns were grouped into themes representing strategies, social practices, and cultural considerations in supporting students with ADHD-related behaviors.

## 4. Results and Analysis

### 4.1 Category 1: Strategies for Building an Inclusive Classroom Community

Teachers emphasized early, consistent, and structured community-building:

- Weekly classroom meetings
- Daily routines promoting respect
- Collaborative activities strengthening peer relationships
- Reflective conversations defining behavioral norms

These strategies reflect both relational and cultural mediation, helping students understand social expectations while fostering belonging (Mikami & Normand, 2015).

### 4.2 Category 2: Supporting Students With ADHD-Related Behaviors

#### *Theme 1: Parent–Teacher Collaboration*

Frequent communication via conferences, texts, or coordinated strategies strengthened consistency between home and school, supporting social-emotional regulation (Sheridan et al., 2019; Kraft & Dougherty, 2013).

#### *Theme 2: Support From Classroom Personnel*

Teachers relied on educational assistants and counselors for one-on-one guidance, emotional support, and assistance with challenging tasks, highlighting social scaffolding and community support in practice.

#### *Theme 3: Instructional Scaffolds*

Visual schedules, chunked tasks, guided instructions, strategic seating, and flexible grouping reduced cognitive load and supported social participation (DuPaul et al., 2018; Anastopoulos & Shelton, 2020).

### 4.3 Category 3: Structuring the Learning Environment

Collaborative learning strategies—peer modeling, partner work, and small-group tasks—were paired with individualized support for focused tasks, balancing attention regulation and social engagement (Carbone, 2001; Hoza, 2007).

## 5. Discussion

The findings underscore the multifaceted roles teachers play in supporting students with ADHD-related behaviors, emphasizing their function as social mediators, cultural interpreters, and agents of inclusion. Teachers not only implement instructional strategies but also shape the social and emotional climate of the classroom, integrating cultural awareness and relational practices to foster equitable participation.

### 5.1 Community-Building as a Foundation

Teachers consistently prioritized structured classroom norms, routines, and reflective practices to cultivate predictability and emotional safety, which are crucial for students with ADHD (Mikami & Normand, 2015). In the Philippine context, this involves culturally resonant practices such as morning circle discussions, group reflection sessions, or collaborative “problem-solving corners” that reinforce *pakikisama* (harmonious relationships) and collective accountability. For example, teachers might encourage students to set shared

classroom agreements on respect, turn-taking, or noise levels, promoting both behavioral regulation and peer inclusion. These practices position teachers as social mediators, translating broader societal values into daily classroom routines, thereby helping students with ADHD navigate both academic and social expectations.

Beyond routines and norms, community-building also involves modeling emotional regulation and conflict resolution. Teachers actively demonstrate patience, use empathetic language, and guide peer interactions during disagreements, creating a classroom culture in which mistakes or impulsive behaviors are treated as learning opportunities rather than punishable offenses. This relational approach reduces social stigma and encourages students with ADHD to participate without fear of judgment, reinforcing both self-esteem and social cohesion within the classroom.

### *5.2 Collaboration as Essential to Inclusion*

The study highlights the importance of collaboration with families and multidisciplinary school personnel to sustain inclusive practices. Teachers actively communicate with parents using text messaging, social media, and scheduled conferences, ensuring continuity between home and school expectations (Ahsan & Sharma, 2020; Sheridan et al., 2019). They also coordinate with guidance counselors, educational assistants, and fellow teachers to implement consistent strategies, such as individualized seating arrangements, behavioral checklists, or joint monitoring of homework completion. In doing so, teachers function as cultural interpreters, bridging institutional guidelines, family expectations, and student needs. This collaborative role is particularly significant in Filipino schools, where community and relational networks are central to educational practices, and where social cohesion is valued as much as academic achievement.

Collaboration also extends to negotiating classroom norms and adapting pedagogical approaches to suit cultural and contextual realities. For instance, teachers may hold meetings with parents to discuss culturally influenced behavioral expectations—such as respect for authority or social conformity—and adjust strategies to align with family values while maintaining educational objectives. This role positions teachers as facilitators of social understanding, ensuring that inclusive practices resonate with both the community and the student's individual experiences.

### *5.3 Instructional Scaffolding Reduces Cognitive and Social Stress*

Teachers implement evidence-based scaffolding strategies to reduce cognitive load and emotional stress for students with ADHD, including visual schedules, task chunking, guided instructions, and structured routines (DuPaul et al., 2018). In crowded classrooms, such scaffolds not only facilitate task completion but also help prevent social conflicts or feelings of exclusion. For instance, a teacher may break a writing assignment into smaller steps, display each step visually, and assign a peer mentor to provide subtle guidance, reducing frustration while modeling cooperative behavior. These practices demonstrate the teacher's dual role in supporting cognitive development and social-emotional regulation, integrating individual attention with classroom-wide expectations, and emphasizing the relational dimension of learning that is central in social-science analyses of inclusive practice.

Instructional scaffolding also involves culturally responsive strategies that acknowledge students' lived experiences and prior knowledge. For example, teachers may incorporate local stories, examples, or metaphors into tasks to make content more relatable, increasing engagement while simultaneously scaffolding attention and comprehension. By connecting learning to students' social and cultural realities, scaffolding becomes a holistic tool that addresses both academic and socio-emotional needs, reinforcing the teacher's role as a mediator between curriculum content and student experience.

### *5.4 Flexible Learning Structures Enhance Engagement*

Teachers employ flexible learning structures to accommodate the attentional and social needs of students with ADHD, combining peer collaboration with individualized support (Mikami et al., 2020; Hoza, 2007). Strategies include rotating small groups, pairing students with ADHD with patient peers, and providing quiet or low-stimulation areas for focused work. These practices reflect the teacher's adaptive role as a social and cultural mediator, interpreting students' behaviors within the context of classroom norms, cultural expectations, and peer dynamics. For example, a Filipino classroom might integrate cooperative math problem-solving where students take turns explaining their reasoning, allowing those with ADHD to participate actively while receiving peer modeling and scaffolding. This approach reinforces inclusion not only academically but socially, demonstrating how flexible structures can mitigate stigma, promote peer acceptance, and strengthen classroom cohesion.

Flexible learning structures also require ongoing observation and responsiveness. Teachers must continually assess student engagement, adjust groupings, and modify tasks to accommodate fluctuating attention spans or emotional states. By dynamically adapting the learning environment, teachers demonstrate expertise not only in curriculum delivery but also in social orchestration, creating classrooms that are sensitive to the interaction between individual needs, peer dynamics, and cultural expectations.

### 5.5 Integration of Cultural Awareness and Reflective Practice

Across all roles, teachers exhibited reflective, adaptive, and culturally grounded practices. They interpreted behaviors through the lens of local social norms and classroom culture, mediating between individual student needs, peer interactions, and institutional expectations. By combining relational, instructional, and collaborative strategies, teachers produced inclusive environments where students with ADHD could engage academically, regulate their behavior, and participate socially. From a humanities and social sciences perspective, this highlights how classroom inclusion is a culturally situated social practice, in which teachers act as agents shaping not only learning outcomes but also students' social experiences and identities.

The implications of these findings extend beyond pedagogical technique to broader societal, cultural, and policy domains. First, at the social level, teachers' practices demonstrate the centrality of relational mediation in reducing stigma and fostering peer acceptance. By interpreting ADHD-related behaviors through culturally informed frameworks—acknowledging local norms such as *pakikisama* (harmonious relationships), respect for authority, and collective responsibility—teachers actively shape social norms within classrooms. This positions the classroom as a microcosm for negotiating cultural values, social hierarchies, and inclusive behaviors, providing students with experiential opportunities to learn social competence alongside academic content.

Second, at the cultural and identity level, reflective practice allows teachers to consider how ADHD intersects with students' personal and social identities. By adapting strategies to the unique sociocultural context of their students, teachers help normalize neurodiversity, promoting self-efficacy, resilience, and a sense of belonging. These practices suggest that inclusion is not only about curriculum adaptation or behavior management but also about fostering the social and cultural recognition of difference, empowering students to navigate broader societal expectations while retaining their individuality.

Third, at the policy and institutional level, the study underscores the need for frameworks that support culturally responsive inclusion. Teachers' reflective and adaptive practices illustrate the importance of professional development that integrates social, cultural, and behavioral understanding alongside evidence-based instructional strategies. Policies that recognize the classroom as a socially and culturally embedded environment—not just a site for academic delivery—can guide resource allocation, teacher training, and multidisciplinary collaboration in ways that make inclusion both practical and socially meaningful.

Finally, these insights have implications for research in the humanities and social sciences. Understanding ADHD inclusion through the lens of social practice, cultural mediation, and teacher reflection highlights the complex interplay between individual behavior, social norms, and institutional structures. It encourages scholars to examine inclusion not only as an educational intervention but as a socio-cultural phenomenon, where teachers, peers, families, and communities co-construct the conditions for equitable learning and social participation.

## 6. Conclusion

This study illustrates that teachers occupy complex, multidimensional roles in fostering inclusive classrooms for students exhibiting ADHD-related behaviors. Their strategies—including structured community-building, family collaboration, support staff engagement, and instructional scaffolding—demonstrate that classroom inclusion is not solely a pedagogical concern but also a social and cultural practice. Teachers interpret behaviors through the lens of local norms, peer interactions, and institutional expectations, acting as mediators who balance academic, behavioral, and social-emotional demands. These efforts enable students with ADHD to participate meaningfully, regulate their behavior, and develop a sense of belonging, highlighting the interplay between education, culture, and social equity.

From a humanities and social sciences standpoint, the findings underscore that inclusive classrooms are microcosms of broader societal dynamics. Teachers' culturally responsive strategies help students navigate social hierarchies, peer relationships, and normative expectations, reducing stigma and shaping identity formation. Inclusion, therefore, emerges as an ethical and socially situated practice where educators are agents of socialization as well as learning. By foregrounding relational, cultural, and reflective dimensions, teachers contribute to holistic development, demonstrating that effective inclusion requires both empathy and deliberate, evidence-informed practice.

## 7. Recommendations

Teacher education programs should embed neurodiversity, inclusive pedagogy, and culturally responsive strategies into pre-service and in-service training. Emphasizing reflective practice, social mediation, and cultural awareness equips teachers to navigate classroom norms, peer interactions, and institutional expectations while supporting students' behavioral and academic needs. Ongoing professional development, mentoring, and collaborative peer networks can reinforce these competencies, enabling teachers to adapt strategies effectively in diverse classroom contexts.

Schools and policymakers should strengthen family–school partnerships through structured, culturally sensitive communication systems, such as conferences, messaging platforms, or home visits, ensuring consistency between home and school environments. Expanding access to multidisciplinary support—including educational assistants, counselors, and special educators—fosters shared responsibility for students’ academic, behavioral, and social-emotional development. Integrating flexible frameworks such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), adapted to local cultural and classroom contexts, can enhance inclusive practice while honoring students’ social and emotional experiences.

Future research should explore inclusion as a socio-cultural phenomenon, incorporating perspectives from students, families, and communities. Investigating the classroom as a site where social norms, cultural expectations, and power relations intersect can generate insights into effective strategies for promoting equity and participation.

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