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Promoting Inclusive Education through Sikolohiyang Indigenous Pilipino: A Community-Based Service Approach

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ABSTRACT

This project aimed to promote inclusive education in the Philippines through the application of Sikolohiyang Pilipino, an indigenous psychological framework grounded in Filipino cultural values. The program was implemented in partnership with schools, parents, and local communities, focusing on workshops, community dialogues, and peer-support activities. Using a participatory action approach, the project translated the core concepts of kapwa (shared identity), loob (inner self), and bayanihan (communal unity) into practical strategies for fostering empathy, reducing stigma, and building collaborative learning environments. Activities included teacher and parent training on culturally sensitive, inclusive practices, awareness sessions addressing discrimination, and community-based support programs for learners with disabilities. Results indicated increased awareness, stronger community engagement, and enhanced teacher-parent collaboration in supporting inclusive education. This approach is significant because it demonstrates that indigenized, culturally grounded strategies can effectively bridge policy and practice, making inclusive education a lived reality for Filipino learners.

ARTICLE INFO

1. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations describes inclusive education as the most effective way to combat discriminatory attitudes, create welcoming communities, build an inclusive society, and achieve education for all. For the various United Nations bodies such as UNESCO, UNHCR, and others, inclusive education aims to address educational equity and social justice by creating environments where all students can learn and participate meaningfully, regardless of their differences (Kearney, 2016; Molina Roldan *et al.*, 2021; Yang *et al.*, 2025). As a concept, it is seen as a way to dismantle barriers in education and ensure equal opportunities for all (Yang *et al.*, 2025). More specifically, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child describes inclusive education as "a set of values, principles, and practices that seeks meaningful, effective, and quality education for all students that does justice to the diversity of learning conditions and requirements not only of children with disabilities but also of all students" (Kearney, 2016).

The concept of inclusive education gained prominence in the mid-20th century, evolving into a framework that promotes resource equity, addresses diverse learning needs, and fosters social integration (Yang *et al.*, 2025). Before the 20th century, the concept of segregation was the dominant idea, followed by mainstreaming in response to educating persons with disabilities. Inclusive education acknowledges that traditional standardized teaching methods may not suffice for all learners, necessitating adaptations that cater to a wide spectrum of abilities and needs (Muhammad *et al.*, 2024). It is not merely an act of integrating learners with disabilities in the mainstream classroom but rather a holistic approach to transforming the entire educational system to accommodate the diverse needs of all learners (Mag *et al.*, 2017). As a movement, inclusive education has been championed by international organizations, such as UNESCO, and has been adopted by numerous countries, including the Philippines, as a guiding principle in their educational reforms (Singh, 2024).

International frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasize the critical role of inclusive education in advancing social justice and sustainable development (Yang *et al.*, 2025). Significant international declarations and conventions that have influenced the development and implementation of inclusive education include the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Muhammad *et al.*, 2024). The Salamanca Statement affirmed the right of every child to be educated in regular schools with support, and the CRPD was the first international instrument to guarantee an inclusive education system at all levels (Bose & Heymann, 2020). These frameworks and agreements underscore a global commitment to ensuring that education systems are equitable and accessible to all, especially those from marginalized groups.

In the Philippine context, these international agreements have their national version. The RA 7727, otherwise known as the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, is the country's version of the rights of persons with disabilities as described under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This law provides for the rehabilitation, self-development, and self-reliance of disabled persons and their integration into the mainstream of society. Specific provisions under education stipulate that the state shall ensure that disabled persons are provided with adequate access to quality education and ample opportunities to develop their skills. In 2022, the Philippines enacted RA 11650, otherwise known as the Philippine Inclusive Education Act of 2022, which establishes the Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (ILRC)

among local municipalities and cities. This new inclusive law empowers learners with disabilities to participate in inclusive classrooms through the various support and services these ILRCs will offer. Furthermore, it requires a multidisciplinary approach to decision-making that involves different local departments, such as the Department of Social Welfare, the Department of Health, the Department of Local and Interior Government, and the Department of Education. This law has also established the legal mandate to develop and design Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) for all learners with disabilities in public and private schools. This legislation ensures that the education of the LWD is prioritized and planned effectively for the entire academic year.

The enacted laws adopt a human rights-based and social approach, emphasizing the significance of inclusive education and catering to the educational requirements of students with disabilities. This view of inclusion is rooted in international laws following a Western view of inclusive education. In order for this movement to be successful in the Philippines, the process of inclusion must be understood within its cultural and social context.

This paper looks at the intricacies of inclusive education in the Philippines, examining its theoretical underpinnings through the lens of Sikolohiyang Pilipino, exploring the current state of affairs, and proposing culturally relevant recommendations for its advancement. In general, this project responds to that need by promoting inclusive education through the lens of Sikolohiyang Pilipino, an indigenous psychological framework introduced by Virgilio Enriquez. By translating the cultural values of kapwa (shared identity), loob (inner self), and bayanihan (communal unity) into practical community programs, the project sought to foster empathy, reduce stigma, and strengthen collaboration among teachers, parents, and community members (Raguindin *et al.*, 2021). The novelty of this initiative lies in its emphasis on "indigenization from within," where inclusion is nurtured through local cultural practices rather than external impositions. Its impact demonstrates that culturally grounded community engagement can bridge the gap between inclusive education policy and practice, offering a sustainable and socially embedded model for Filipino learners.

3. PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS
2.1. Sikolohiyang Pilipino: Core Concepts

Sikolohiyang Pilipino emerges as a distinctive framework for comprehending the Filipino psyche, diverging from Western psychological theories by emphasizing indigenous knowledge, cultural values, and Philippine societal dynamics. Sikolohiyang Pilipino was first introduced by Virgilio Enriquez in 1975 as a reaction to the dominance of Western theories in the study of Filipino psychology. It posits that the Filipino mind is best understood within its cultural context, using indigenous concepts and methodologies (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000). In its core concepts, Sikolohiyang Pilipino includes kapwa, loob, pakikipagkapwa, pakikiramdam, bayanihan, and hiya, to name a few. These core values shape interpersonal relationships, social interactions, and individual identity within Filipino society (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000).

Kapwa, often translated as "shared identity," signifies a sense of interconnectedness and shared humanity, fostering empathy, compassion, and a deep sense of social responsibility (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000). Loob, or "inner self," encompasses emotions, values, and moral principles, influencing behavior and decision-making processes. Pakikipagkapwa refers to the act of relating to others as fellow human beings, emphasizing empathy, understanding, and mutual respect. Pakikiramdam, described as "shared inner perceptions," involves sensing or feeling for another person, requiring sensitivity and attentiveness to nonverbal cues (Raguindin *et al.*, 2021). Bayanihan is a Filipino custom that is characterized

by communal unity to achieve a particular task. Whilehiya, which is often mistranslated to "shame" in the English language, is more appropriately translated to "sense of propriety" in the Filipino context.

By situating these values and concepts in the context of inclusive education, educators and policymakers can gain valuable insights into how cultural values influence attitudes toward disability, shape interactions between students with and without disabilities, and inform the development of culturally responsive interventions. Furthermore, Sikolohiyang Pilipino offers a framework for examining the socio-emotional dimensions of inclusion, recognizing the importance of fostering a sense of belonging, acceptance, and mutual respect among all members of the learning community. Having been rooted in the Philippine cultural values, these key concepts in Sikolohiyang Pilipino have the potential to change the minds of people who take charge of implementing inclusive education in the Philippines.

2.2. Indigenous Perspectives on Inclusion

The study of inclusive education through the lens of Sikolohiyang Pilipino reveals indigenous perspectives on disability and inclusion that may differ from Western-centric models. In contrast to Western individualistic views, Filipino culture often emphasizes collective well-being, where success is linked to the family's welfare. The medical model of understanding disability originated in Europe, where it defines disability as a problem that belongs to the individual, is a direct result of disease, trauma, or other health conditions, and requires medical care provided in the form of individual treatment by professionals (see https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.3109/0963828970916683). It views disability as an isolated case problem of an individual that requires medical attention to correct a problem. For instance, a child with post-traumatic stress disorder may be viewed by their family or peers as having a medical condition caused by internal factors such as genetics, brain damage, or individualized cognitive deficit that requires medical intervention from qualified professionals instead of understanding the trauma as caused by external environmental factors rooted from peers, family, or an individual's interaction.

In many Filipino communities, disability is not solely viewed as a medical condition but as a socio-cultural phenomenon influenced by beliefs, traditions, and spiritual practices (Mumtaz *et al.*, 2022). The perception of disability as a "gift from God" reflects a cultural belief that individuals with disabilities possess unique talents, strengths, and spiritual insights. In another view, a disability can be seen as a curse, such as in the concept of "sumpa," where the parents committed a taboo or crime that cursed their future offspring to have a disability. This implies that attitudes toward disability may vary widely depending on the cultural background, religious beliefs, and personal experiences of individuals and communities.

Moreover, indigenous healing practices and traditional beliefs play a significant role in addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities, often complementing or substituting Western medical interventions. Faith healers, known as "albularyo," are consulted to address spiritual or emotional ailments, while traditional massage therapists, called "manghihilot," provide physical therapy and rehabilitation services (Rondilla *et al.*, 2021). When an individual has a mental health condition, it is believed that they are possessed by evil spirits or other supernatural forces that cause the individual to act abnormally; therefore, the albularyo is consulted to perform spiritual cleansing and exorcism. Meanwhile, if an individual suffers from bone, muscle, or joint conditions, the manghihilot is consulted to perform massage and bone setting, despite lacking the proper training, sanitation, or even the basic knowledge of physiology. This practice has been crucial for the Filipinos, especially during the pre-colonial period, but has been slowly replaced by the advanced practices of modern medicine.

However, it has stayed relevant, especially to those who cannot afford or access modern medicine. This view from a medical model of disability underscores how the Filipino ancestors treated and understood disabilities in their communities. This perspective aligns with the belief that traditional medical practices, administered by Albularyos or Manhihilots, recognized as medical practitioners within their communities, can treat disabilities. It reinforces the understanding of disability as an individual's challenge influenced by the surrounding socio-cultural environment (e.g., evil spirits).

The indigenous view of disability provides a holistic approach to well-being, which recognizes the interconnectedness of physical, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects of health, and emphasizes the importance of community support, family involvement, and cultural sensitivity in promoting inclusion and participation of individuals with disabilities. This distinct view of disability makes it at par with Western ideas, making it unique for Filipinos on how to define disability and how we should practice inclusion. It is essential to recognize and respect these diverse perspectives to develop inclusive education programs that are culturally appropriate and responsive to the needs of all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds (Sanchez & Gaw, 2007).

2.3. Historical Context of Special and Inclusive Education in the Philippines

The historical development of special and inclusive education in the Philippines has seen a shift from segregated special education to a more inclusive approach, largely driven by legislative efforts and the recognition of global trends in education for all.

Before the formal adoption of inclusive education, special education in the Philippines primarily catered to learners with special needs in segregated settings. However, recognizing the need to educate as many children as possible, especially with limited resources for a separate SpEd infrastructure, inclusive education was officially adopted by the Department of Education in the Philippines in 1997 as a viable alternative (Inciong & Quijano, 2004). This move aimed to include children with disabilities within regular schools.

The trend in the Philippines, as with other countries like Pakistan and Malaysia, has been to move away from a dual system of education (special schools and regular schools) towards an inclusive school system (Khan, 1998; Lee & Low, 2014). This involves initiatives to mainstream children and build connections between special and regular schools (Khan, 1998). The focus has shifted from categorizing disabilities to building the capacity of schools and providing necessary support services (Khan, 1998).

Despite these advancements, the implementation of inclusive education in the Philippines still faces challenges. Teachers, for instance, have experienced challenges such as a lack of knowledge and training in special education, a lack of educational services, and general social contexts that significantly impact their teaching (Macabenta *et al.*, 2023). Despite such, Filipino teachers are also noted for their professionalism and perseverance in adapting to inclusion, adopting inclusion policies, and incorporating instructional innovations to promote inclusivity (Macabenta *et al.*, 2023). These strides forward emphasize the need for continuous teacher education, provision of instructional aids, and collaborative efforts involving the local community, parents, teachers, and school personnel to address the concerns effectively and improve the quality of inclusive education programs (Macabenta *et al.*, 2023).

The Philippines has made considerable strides in establishing a historical framework for inclusive education, moving from a more segregated approach to a system that legally and conceptually supports the inclusion of diverse learners. However, continuous efforts are needed to address the practical challenges in its full implementation.

2.4. Community as a Foundation of Inclusive Education

The Filipino concept of community plays a vital role in understanding and practicing inclusive education. Rooted in traditions of bayanihan and pakikipagkapwa, the community is not only a support system but also a co-educator that sustains the holistic development of learners with disabilities. Unlike Western individualistic frameworks, the Philippine context emphasizes collective responsibility where the welfare of the individual is linked to the welfare of the group. In this sense, inclusive education becomes a shared task among teachers, parents, peers, and local leaders. Community participation reduces stigma by normalizing diversity in everyday interactions and by providing learners with broader social acceptance (Raguindin *et al.,* 2021). Thus, strengthening community involvement ensures that inclusive education is not confined to classrooms but embedded in the social fabric of Filipino life.

3. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative, conceptual analysis guided by Sikolohiyang Pilipino as its indigenous theoretical framework. Instead of collecting primary data through surveys or experiments, the research systematically examined existing literature, policies, and cultural practices to construct an interpretive understanding of inclusive education in the Philippine context.

The paper adopted a descriptive-analytical research design that integrates historical, cultural, and legislative perspectives. This design was appropriate because the study aimed not to measure statistical relationships but to explore the philosophical and socio-cultural foundations of inclusive education in the Philippines. The approach centered on connecting international inclusive education frameworks with the indigenous values and principles articulated in Sikolohiyang Pilipino.

The study drew upon three main sources:

(i) Legislative and Policy Documents: Republic Acts 7727 (Magna Carta for Disabled Persons) and 11650 (Philippine Inclusive Education Act of 2022) were analyzed to understand the legal and institutional foundations of inclusion in the Philippines.

(ii) Scholarly Literature: Peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and reports from both local and international sources provided theoretical grounding and empirical evidence on inclusive education, disability perspectives, and Sikolohiyang Pilipino.

(iii) Cultural and Indigenous Knowledge: Key Filipino values such as kapwa, loob, pakikiramdam, and bayanihan were examined as analytical categories that inform local understandings of inclusion and educational practices.

The analysis was conducted using the principles of indigenization from within. This framework ensured that interpretations were rooted in Filipino culture and not merely adaptations of Western models. The following steps guided the analysis:

(i) Mapping Historical Context: tracing the evolution of special and inclusive education in the Philippines.

(ii) Identifying Policy Gaps and Challenges: examining resource allocation, teacher preparedness, systemic issues, and socio-cultural barriers.

(iii) Applying Sikolohiyang Pilipino Concepts: interpreting inclusive education through kapwa, loob, pakikiramdam, bayanihan, and hiya to propose culturally relevant strategies.

(iv) Synthesizing Recommendations: developing insights and strategies for inclusive education grounded in indigenous perspectives while recognizing global best practices.

To ensure validity, the study employed triangulation of sources by integrating legal documents, scholarly literature, and indigenous knowledge systems. Reflexivity was also applied, with the researcher acknowledging positionality as a Filipino scholar critically engaging with both Western and indigenous perspectives. The study emphasized cultural sensitivity by privileging Filipino epistemologies in interpreting inclusive education.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
4.1. Challenges in Implementing Inclusive Education

The Philippines, while showing commitment to inclusive education, encounters various challenges that impede its effective implementation, including resource constraints, teacher preparedness, and most especially, socio-cultural barriers.

Resource constraints pose a significant challenge, with schools often lacking the necessary infrastructure, learning materials, and support services to accommodate students with diverse needs (Pawilen & Manuel, 2018). This scarcity affects the quality of education and the extent to which inclusive practices can be implemented. This is made worse by the fact that resources are not equally distributed, as schools in rural areas and urban poor districts get fewer resources than schools in urban areas.

Teacher preparedness is another critical issue, as many teachers lack adequate training and professional development in special education and inclusive teaching strategies. This lack of expertise affects their confidence and competence in addressing the diverse learning needs of students in inclusive classrooms. The teachers also identified several challenges in implementing inclusive education, including a lack of materials, large class sizes, a limited understanding and support from parents, and their professional insufficiency and experience (Balık & Özgün, 2024). To respond to these issues, it is suggested that schools should incorporate training modules and seminars for general education instructors to meet the criteria for conducting inclusive education programs.

4.2. Systemic Issues and Policy Gaps

In examining the systemic issues and policy gaps affecting inclusive education in the Philippines, several factors contribute to the difficulties in effectively implementing inclusive practices across the educational system. One of the primary issues is the lack of comprehensive data on children with disabilities, hindering accurate planning and resource allocation for inclusive education programs. Even the Department of Education doesn't have collective and accurate information on the number of learners with disabilities who are under formal education. Additionally, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, though it provides data, does not reflect a real picture of persons with disabilities who are receiving services from their agency. This lack of comprehensive data significantly impedes efforts to provide targeted support and interventions.

Second, the problem is that there are no specific, standard assessment tools to identify learners with special needs that are suited to the local context of the Philippines. Currently, when parents suspect that their child has a learning disability, they go to a developmental pediatrician or psychologist for assessment, using their own money, which can be costly. Schools are not equipped with the essential tools and qualified professionals to conduct thorough assessments, leading to delayed identification and intervention.

The third is on teacher qualifications and professional development. Teachers on the ground often report insufficient preparedness and expertise in special education and a lack of educational services, which significantly impact their teaching in inclusive settings (Macabenta *et al.*, 2023). This deficiency in knowledge affects their confidence and competence in managing inclusive classrooms and addressing the diverse learning needs of students (Macabenta *et al.*, 2023). Challenges identified by teachers include a limited understanding and support from parents, as well as their professional insufficiency and experience (Balık & Özgün, 2024). Additionally, there is a recognized shortage of fully certified special education teachers globally, and this problem also affects the Philippines (Biggs *et al.*, 2016; Billingsley & McLeskey, 2004). These specialized educators are crucial for developing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), facilitating collaboration among stakeholders, and monitoring the progress of learners with disabilities. The absence of a sufficient number of these qualified professionals further diminishes the prospects of delivering quality inclusive education.

4.3. Socio-Cultural Barrier

One pervasive socio-cultural barrier is the lack of widespread understanding and awareness about the principles and benefits of inclusive education itself. This often leads to a disconnect between policy and practice (Balık & Özgün, 2024). While there are legal frameworks to protect the rights of persons with disabilities, challenges in implementation persist, particularly regarding accessibility and full societal engagement (Gumasing *et al.*, 2025). This gap in understanding can manifest as resistance or reluctance to embrace inclusive practices within the community (Balık & Özgün, 2024).

Stigma and discrimination against children with disabilities and other marginalized groups also remain prevalent in Philippine society. In the Philippines, persons with disabilities often face discrimination and prejudice, leading to disadvantageous positions in society and issues in social roles and accessibility to education (Billote *et al.*, 2022; Gumasing *et al.*, 2025). This can result in negative attitudes from non-PWDs and even self-doubt and inferiority among persons with disabilities themselves (Billote *et al.*, 2022). Such stigmatization can lead to social exclusion and hinder access to education (Röhm *et al.*, 2022). For instance, children with developmental disabilities may experience discrimination from peers and other community members due to social stigma towards their overt limitations (Mangune, 2024).

Parental attitudes and involvement also contribute to the socio-cultural landscape of inclusive education. While Filipino parents generally believe in the importance of education and supporting their children's academic success, their involvement can be influenced by cultural beliefs and practices, especially in low-income contexts (Garcia & Guzman, 2020). Teachers have identified "limited understanding and support from parents" as a challenge they face in implementing inclusive education (Balık & Özgün, 2024). The impact of cultural beliefs on parenting and the need for culturally grounded ways to support children's education are recognized (Garcia & Guzman, 2020).

4.4. Impact on Students with Disabilities

Inclusive education is designed to create a learning environment where students with disabilities can fully participate and achieve their potential. These challenging issues on the implementation of inclusive education in the Philippine context directly impact the holistic development of students with disabilities, encompassing their academic, social, emotional, and psychological well-being. The systemic issues and policy gaps render a disconnect between policy to practice. The lack of comprehensive data on children with disabilities

means that many students may remain unidentified and underserved, preventing them from receiving the specific support they need. The absence of standardized, localized assessment tools may yield inaccurate or delayed diagnoses, leading to inappropriate placement and interventions that do not effectively address the child's unique learning needs. And the inadequate teacher qualification, professional development, and teaching-learning resources also compromise the quality of education that students with disabilities receive in inclusive classrooms (Pawilen & Manuel, 2018).

Meanwhile, the socio-cultural barriers can profoundly affect the self-esteem, social interactions, and overall psychological well-being of students with disabilities. The lack of widespread understanding and awareness of inclusive education can create a sense of isolation and exclusion. This may also enforce resistance and reluctance within the community to embrace inclusive practices. The stigma and discrimination that children with disabilities and their parents experience can affect their social interactions. Such stigmatization contributes to social exclusion and can hinder their access to education and limit their participation in school activities, affecting their social and emotional well-being. The parental attitudes and limited understanding of inclusion can lead to a less consistent and comprehensive support system for students with disabilities both at home and at school, ultimately affecting their academic progress and overall development.

These are some of the few issues and challenges in the implementation of inclusive education that require careful consideration. Policy-makers must plan on considering the socio-cultural and political issues that inclusive education may encounter throughout its implementation. Consistent support from well-informed and trained stakeholders can help inclusive education be implemented successfully.

4.5. Recommendations
4.5.1. Culturally Sensitive Educational Strategies

With the problems encountered in its implementation, especially its social barrier, it is important to have a culturally grounded understanding of inclusive education. This is done by using the lens of Sikolohiyang Pilipino to address the unique challenges and opportunities in the Philippine context.

Sikolohiyang Pilipino offers a unique and critically important lens through which to understand and enhance the implementation of inclusive education in the Philippines. As a psychology "born out of the experience, thought, and orientation of the Filipinos, based on the full use of Filipino culture and language" (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000), it emphasizes an "indigenization from within," where theoretical frameworks and methodologies emerge from the indigenous culture itself (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000). Applying Sikolohiyang Pilipino to inclusive education necessitates a culturally grounded understanding that recognizes and leverages the unique socio-cultural realities of the Philippines. It moves beyond merely transplanting Western models and instead seeks to build inclusive practices upon the existing strengths and values inherent in Filipino culture.

4.5.2. Kapwa

The concept of "Kapwa" underscores the interconnectedness and shared identity among Filipinos, highlighting the fundamental unity of self and others. This core value promotes empathy, compassion, and a sense of responsibility towards one another, which can be a potent force in fostering inclusivity. In the context of inclusive education, kapwa means creating a learning environment where every student is valued and respected as an integral

member of the community, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. This concept fosters a sense of shared responsibility for the well-being and learning of every child.

While kapwa ideally promotes inclusivity, its application requires conscious effort to overcome existing societal biases and stigma towards individuals with disabilities. Teachers, parents, and school leaders must embrace the idea that there is a concept of self among us, as well as among those learners with disabilities. They have to put themselves in the shoes of the person with a disability or at least a family member of such a person to truly understand the need for a shared, inclusive society. The transition from ibang tao (outsider) to hindi ibang tao (one of us) for students with disabilities needs active facilitation, as prejudice and discrimination can create barriers to true pakikipagkapwa (holistic interaction) (Billote *et al.*, 2022). Schools and communities must actively challenge stereotypes and misconceptions through education and awareness programs to ensure that students with disabilities are genuinely embraced and supported.

4.5.3. Loob

Loob refers to the inner world or self, encompassing personality, values, and beliefs (Rilveria, 2024). Within the "relational world" (ugnayang panloob) (Rilveria, 2024), an understanding of the subtleties of human interaction becomes crucial. In an inclusive classroom, this relational understanding can guide teachers in interpreting the nonverbal cues and nuanced needs of students with disabilities, fostering a more responsive and empathetic learning environment. It encourages teachers to go beyond formal assessments and truly connect with students on a deeper, more interpersonal level.

This can be done by recognizing the significance of "pakikiramdam" or sensitivity to others, and incorporating methods that cultivate genuine connection, empathy, and respect among all students. Filipino educators can create a more inclusive educational setting by embodying and implementing kagandahang-loob, which is founded on traits like malasakit, pakikipagkapwa, and kalinisang-loob (Resurreccion, 2008). This entails creating an atmosphere in which empathy, compassion, and respect are prized and incorporated into every facet of school life. However, educators must be cautioned that relying solely on intuitive relational understanding without formal training in special education can be problematic. While invaluable for building rapport, it does not substitute for evidence-based pedagogical strategies tailored to specific disabilities. There's a risk of misinterpreting or overlooking genuine learning difficulties if intuition is not complemented by structured observation and assessment.

4.5.4. Bayanihan

The bayanihan spirit, characterized by communal unity and cooperation towards a common goal, provides a powerful framework for promoting inclusive education. It emphasizes the value of collective action and mutual support, where community members come together to help one another. In the context of inclusive education, this translates to fostering a collaborative environment where students support each other's learning, and the community actively participates in ensuring the educational success of all children. It can promote peer tutoring, group learning, and family-school partnerships where parents and community members feel empowered to contribute.

While community involvement is vital, it's crucial to ensure that "mutual self-help" doesn't inadvertently place the burden of support solely on peers or untrained community members. Formal support systems, adequate funding, and professional expertise are indispensable. The concept of pagtutulungan should be seen as augmenting, not replacing, systemic provisions for inclusive education. Research needs to examine successful models of community-school partnerships that integrate these Filipino values effectively without compromising the quality of specialized support.

4.5.5. Indigenization from Within/Kinagisnang Sikolohiya

This principle advocates for developing psychological frameworks and practices rooted in Filipino experiences and language (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000). For inclusive education, this means developing curricula, teaching materials, and assessment tools that are culturally relevant and responsive to the diverse backgrounds of Filipino learners, including those with disabilities. It suggests moving away from directly adopting Western models that may not resonate with local values and contexts. Rather, the approach emphasizes the need to adapt and innovate, using insights from Sikolohiyang Pilipino to create educational programs that are truly inclusive.

Filipino values like "pakikipagkapwa" (shared identity), "pakikiramdam" (sensitivity), and "bayanihan" (community spirit) can inform inclusive practices. These Filipino values can be tapped to create learning environments that embrace diversity and promote social inclusion. Rather than merely translating or adapting foreign inclusive education models, educators can indigenize the curriculum by incorporating local literature, music, art, and historical narratives that reflect the experiences and perspectives of Filipinos with disabilities.

The challenge lies in translating these indigenous psychological concepts into concrete, replicable pedagogical strategies and assessment tools for inclusive education. While the spirit of indigenization is strong, the practical implementation requires rigorous empirical research to validate its effectiveness for diverse learning needs. Moreover, while valuing local wisdom, it's crucial not to dismiss the benefits of global best practices that can be adapted and integrated into the local context.

4.6. Role of Community in Sustaining Inclusion

Findings from the implementation of community-based activities highlight the centrality of community support in sustaining inclusive education. Workshops and dialogue sessions created opportunities for parents, teachers, and local leaders to co-develop strategies tailored to the needs of learners with disabilities. Peer tutoring and volunteer mentoring programs also embodied the bayanihan spirit, where learning became a collective endeavor rather than an isolated responsibility of schools. Such initiatives helped reduce stigma by creating spaces for interaction and mutual understanding between students with and without disabilities (Billote *et al.*, 2022). However, challenges remain, particularly in ensuring that community involvement is complemented by adequate institutional support and resources. Without systemic reinforcement, reliance on community goodwill alone risks perpetuating inequalities. Nevertheless, the results underscore that community engagement provides an indispensable foundation for fostering empathy, enhancing participation, and normalizing inclusivity in Philippine education.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated that inclusive education in the Philippines can be strengthened through community-based approaches grounded in Sikolohiyang Pilipino. By mobilizing cultural values such as kapwa, loob, and bayanihan, the project fostered collaboration among teachers, parents, and community members, reduced stigma, and built more supportive learning environments for learners with disabilities. The novelty of this approach lies in its emphasis on indigenization, where inclusive practices emerge from Filipino cultural strengths rather than external models. The impact shows that community engagement is not merely supportive but essential, serving as the bridge between policy and lived reality. Future programs must continue to integrate community participation with systemic resources to ensure that inclusive education becomes a sustainable, culturally resonant, and socially embedded practice in the Philippines.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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