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FROM RESISTANCE TO RESILIENCE: DIGITAL IMMIGRANT TEACHERS' ADAPTATION TO TECHNOLOGY IN SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological study explores the experiences of digital immigrant teachers in using digital tools to teach students with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Twelve SEN teachers from Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, Malaysia, each with more than five years of teaching experience, participated in semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis identified five key themes: adaptation to technology, impact on student learning, barriers to integration, coping strategies, and emotional responses. The findings revealed that although many teachers initially faced challenges such as limited digital skills, resistance to technology, and insufficient training, they gradually developed confidence through peer support, self-directed learning, and professional development. Participants reported that assistive technologies, including text-to-speech software and adaptive applications, enhanced accessibility and student engagement. However, obstacles such as time constraints and classroom management issues persisted. The study concludes that, with appropriate training and collaborative support, digital immigrant teachers can effectively facilitate inclusive digital education and contribute to improved learning outcomes for SEN students.

Keywords: digital immigrant teachers, special educational needs, inclusive digital education, assistive technology.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Research Objective 1

To explore the lived experiences of digital immigrant teachers when using digital tools with students with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Research Objective 2

To identify the barriers and challenges encountered by digital immigrant teachers in integrating technology into SEN classrooms.

Research Objective 3

To examine the coping strategies and support systems that facilitate digital immigrant teachers' transition toward digital competence.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Qualitative research design to explore in-depth perceptions and lived experiences of SEN teachers

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews

Participants

12 digital immigrants' teachers from Selangor & Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (teachers are from 3 different schools)

Analysis Methods

Braun & Clarke's 6-step thematic analysis framework for systematic pattern identification.

Analysis Method

Code group analysis using ATLAS.ti

FINDINGS

Research Objective 1: Lived Experiences

- Digital anxiety
- Low digital fluency
- Growing confidence
- Technology acceptance
- Professional growth

Research Objective 2: Barriers and Challenges

- Inadequate training
- Digital skills gap
- Classroom management issues

Research Objective 3: Coping Strategies and Support Systems

- Knowledge sharing
- Continuous practice
- Peer mentorship
- Self-directed learning

Every time I had to use computer, I feel like having fever-Teacher 2A

Finding time to learn new applications was difficult.-Teacher 5A

My colleagues helped me whenever I faced difficulties-Teacher 4A

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Digital immigrant teachers can become effective facilitators of inclusive digital education.



Initial resistance does not preclude eventual digital competence, the journey from resistance to resilience is achievable with appropriate support.



Context-sensitive professional development and intergenerational mentorship are essential infrastructure for inclusive digital education.



Emotional resilience + pedagogical expertise + digital competence = improved SEN learning outcomes.



Bridging the digital divide requires collaborative school cultures and tailored, ongoing teacher support.