



The Observed Influence of Talent Showcases on the Confidence and Self-Esteem of Special Needs Education Learners at Antipolo City SPED Center

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Abstract. This descriptive mixed-methods study was conducted at Antipolo City SPED Center, Division of Antipolo City, to examine the observed influence of quarterly talent showcases on the confidence and self-esteem of Special Needs Education (SNED) learners. Data were gathered after four successive showcases over one school year. Twenty-seven teachers systematically observed and rated 27 learners across three domains: confidence and self-esteem, skills development, and academic and social participation. Quantitative results yielded an overall weighted mean of 4.45 (Excellent) for confidence and self-esteem and 4.69 (Excellent) for skills development, with the strongest gains noted in artistic expression, nonverbal communication, and stage performance. Areas requiring continued support included dance, vocal performance, and verbal interaction. Qualitative insights from focus group discussions and interviews revealed observable improvements in fine motor control, attention span, motivation, peer interaction, and sense of belonging. While findings reflect perceptions within this single site and cannot establish definitive causal relationships, the study concludes that talent showcases serve as valuable strengths-based platforms that appear to nurture confidence, celebrate ability, and support holistic development. Based on these observed outcomes, recommendations include sustained implementation of quarterly showcases, targeted skill support in movement and verbal expression, and ongoing program monitoring to better understand long-term influence.

Keywords: confidence; inclusive education; self-esteem; special needs education; talent showcase

Introduction

Students with disabilities possess unique talents and skills that deserve to be nurtured and celebrated. A talent showcase provides a structured, safe, and supportive platform where learners may demonstrate abilities, receive recognition, and build positive self-perception. Performing in front of an audience—through music, visual arts, dance, or other forms of expression, offers opportunities to experience success and gradually overcome hesitation. As emphasized by Hulinganga (2024), providing learners with meaningful control over their own expression fosters agency and positive self-view; when students showcase what they can do, they move from feeling dependent toward feeling capable. Ajoc (2019) adds that self-esteem is built through consistent positive reinforcement and celebration of strengths, arguing that recognizing ability deserves attention alongside addressing needs. Macazo and Esquilona (2024) further observe that many abilities among learners with disabilities remain hidden without intentional opportunities to perform; talent showcases serve as a bridge between potential and demonstration.

Despite these theoretical premises, a critical gap remains: existing literature largely examines enrichment programs broadly, while few studies specifically document how structured quarterly talent showcases influence confidence and self-esteem among SNED learners in Philippine inclusive settings. Most available evidence describes short-term arts interventions rather than sustained, repeated performance opportunities over an academic year. Prior to this study, a focus group discussion among teachers at Antipolo City SPED Center identified three persistent challenges: SNED learners commonly experience stigma that lowers confidence; opportunities to demonstrate talents are limited; and fear of judgment hinders participation. To address these gaps, the center implemented quarterly talent showcases allowing learners to build skills, repeat performances, and progress gradually.

National policies support this inclusive, strengths-based approach: DepEd Order No. 44, s. 2021 mandates inclusive education and individualized support; DepEd Order No. 18, s. 2017 promotes quality education for all; and DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2019 emphasizes life skills and individualized learning. Globally,



research confirms that performance-based activities enhance well-being and social connection (Maker & Bahar, 2020; Gray, 2019). This study addresses the gap by documenting observed outcomes of sustained showcase participation.

Research Questions

This study examined the observed influence of quarterly talent showcases on the confidence and self-esteem of Special Needs Education (SNEd) learners at Antipolo City SPED Center. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What changes in confidence and self-esteem are observed among SNEd learners following participation in quarterly talent showcases?
2. Which skills appear most developed through repeated showcase participation?
3. How do these activities relate to observed academic engagement and social interaction?

Scope and Delimitation

This study was conducted exclusively at Antipolo City SPED Center, Division of Antipolo City, District I-B, following four quarterly talent showcases over one school year. Observations reflect teacher perceptions and are limited to this setting; findings may not generalize to all SPED centers.

Literature Review

Inclusive Education and SNEd Learners

Inclusive education centers on equity, belonging, and strengths-based development rather than deficit framing. Philippine research confirms that affirming, supportive environments improve self-esteem, motivation, and skill development among SNEd learners (Glabog et al., 2026; Raguindin et al., 2021). International reviews similarly find that recognizing strengths and enabling meaningful participation boosts engagement and aspirations (Duchesne et al., 2023).

Confidence and Self-Esteem Among SNEd Learners

Confidence and self-esteem function as protective factors that buffer stress and support persistence. While SNEd learners often report lower self-concept, longitudinal evidence shows improvements in self-view coincide with better academic engagement (Crisol & Campos, 2025). Interventions focusing on mastery and recognition consistently improve self-perception across domains (Elbaum & Vaughn, 2001; Humphrey et al., 2021).

Talent Showcases as Strengths-Based Intervention

Public demonstration and recognition appear particularly supportive: creative performance programs have yielded measurable self-esteem gains across all ability levels (Taylor & Francis, 2026). Skill mastery with public recognition strengthens self-efficacy, while visible audience affirmation reinforces positive self-perception (Science Publishing Group, 2025; Frontiers, 2026). Learners consistently identify public recognition as the most confidence-building component of such programs (PMC, 2022; PMC, 2025).

Confidence, Self-Esteem, and Performance

Confidence and self-esteem are not merely outcomes—they appear to support greater effort, participation, and social connection. In Philippine settings, learner belief in their own ability predicts consistent engagement and satisfactory progress (Al-Kindi, 2025). Confidence built through public recognition may transfer beyond the event itself, contributing to improved interaction and persistence in daily learning (Sage Journals, 2025; BCU Repository, 2025).

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive convergent parallel mixed-methods design. Quantitative ratings measured the extent of observed changes; qualitative insights explained how and why changes appeared to occur. Both data types were collected concurrently, analyzed separately, then integrated for a more complete understanding. Causal relationships are not claimed; associations are described.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at Antipolo City SPED Center, Division of Antipolo City, District I-B, Philippines. The participants consisted of 27 Special Needs Education (SNEd) learners representing varied disability categories who participated in all four talent showcases, and 27 teachers who served as observers. Total enumeration was used for all eligible teachers, while the learners were selected through convenience sampling based on their consistent participation and availability throughout the school year. The teachers maintained regular interaction with the learners and monitored their development over time, making them appropriate observers of the learners' progress.

Research Instruments

A validated 15-item observation checklist used a 5-point scale (1 = Not Evident to 5 = Highly Evident). Content Validity Index = 0.92; inter-rater reliability = 0.92. A semi-structured interview and focus group discussion guide gathered descriptive insights.

Data Gathering Procedure

The proposal was submitted to the Division Research Committee of Antipolo City for ethical clearance. Upon approval, permission was secured from the Public Schools District Supervisor. Teachers and parents were oriented; written consent was obtained from teachers and from parents or guardians; learner assent was secured. All data were anonymized. The checklist was administered after the fourth showcase; focus group discussions followed. Data were triangulated through cross-referencing ratings with qualitative themes.

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1: What changes in confidence and self-esteem are observed among SNEd learners following participation in quarterly talent showcases?

Table 1. Teacher-Rated Changes in Confidence and Self-Esteem

Indicator	5	4	3	2	1	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Descriptive Rating
1. The learners successfully performed in front of an audience	27 (100%)	0	0	0	0	5.00	0.00	Excellent
2. Increased self-efficacy, as demonstrated by learners with disabilities' skill mastery across all activities	3 (11%)	24 (89%)	0	0	0	4.11	0.32	Good
3. Enhanced social skills through collaborative activities (e.g., group dances, larong Pinoy)	6 (22%)	21 (78%)	0	0	0	4.22	0.42	Excellent
4. Enhanced self-esteem and confidence from skill mastery in art, performance, and practical skills in livelihood	27 (100%)	0	0	0	0	5.00	0.00	Excellent
5. Demonstrated sense of achievement from a simple project accomplished and skill mastery	0	25 (93%)	2 (7%)	0	0	3.93	0.27	Good
Average Weighted Mean & SD						4.45	0.20	Excellent

Teachers observed an overall Excellent rating (WM = 4.45), indicating a consistently positive level of observed change in the learners' confidence and self-esteem following participation in the quarterly talent showcases. Every learner appeared able to perform before an audience, as reflected by the highest rating for successful public performance (WM = 5.00, SD = 0.00), while enhanced self-esteem and confidence through skill mastery in art, performance, and practical livelihood skills also received an Excellent rating (WM = 5.00, SD = 0.00). Social confidence was also highly evident, with enhanced social skills through collaborative activities receiving an Excellent rating (WM = 4.22, SD = 0.42). These findings suggest that repeated opportunities to demonstrate abilities, interact with peers, and receive recognition may provide learners with meaningful experiences of competence and participation. This interpretation is consistent with Mason et al.

(2008), who found that arts involvement among students with disabilities provided opportunities for expression, choice, social development, and demonstration of abilities. Similarly, research involving students with intellectual disabilities found that participation in an art-integrated movement program positively influenced self-expression and aspects of self-efficacy, supporting the potential contribution of creative and performance-based activities to learners' confidence and perceived competence. Hong (2017) likewise reported positive effects of performance-related physical expression activities on self-expression and self-esteem among students with intellectual disabilities. More recent evidence involving children with special educational needs also reported significant improvements in self-esteem following a school-based creative dance workshop, further supporting the potential value of structured creative-performance activities for promoting positive self-perceptions. Self-efficacy and achievement ratings were Good, suggesting that while progress was widespread, some learners may require additional time and support to internalize fully. This interpretation is also consistent with the observed achievement rating ($WM = 3.93$, $SD = 0.27$), which, although positive, was lower than the ratings for public performance and confidence. Thus, the findings suggest that talent showcases may provide valuable opportunities for learners to demonstrate abilities and experience success, while continued opportunities, individualized support, and skill-building activities may be necessary to strengthen self-efficacy and achievement across learners. Importantly, these results reflect teacher-observed changes and therefore support an interpretation of observed positive development rather than definitive causal effects.

Research Question 2: Which skills appear most developed through repeated showcase participation?

Table 2. Teacher-Rated Skills Development

Indicator	5	4	3	2	1	Weighted mean	Standard Deviation	Descriptive Rating
Performance Skills								
1. Improved drawing, painting, coloring, and art skills	27 100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5.00	0.00	Excellent
2. Improved various dance styles, technique, coordination, rhythm, and expression.	5 19%	22 81%	0%	0%	0%	4.19	0.39	Good
3. Improved singing that includes vocal technique, breath control, stage presence, and musicality.	5 19%	22 81%	0%	0%	0%	4.19	0.39	Good
Social-Emotional Skills								
1. Demonstrates increased confidence in performing in front of an audience.	27 100%	0%	0%	0%	0%			
2. Shows reduced anxiety or nervousness before and during the performance.	20 74%	7 26%	0%	0%	0%	4.74	0.45	Excellent
3. Expresses positive self-perception related to their talents and abilities	27 100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5.00	0.00	Excellent
Communication Skills								
1. Clearly communicates with peers and adults	5 19%	22 81%	0%	0%	0%	4.19	0.39	Good
2. Effectively interacts with audience members before and after the performance.	24 89%	3 11%	0%	0%	0%	4.89	0.32	Excellent
3. Uses nonverbal communication effectively (e.g., body language, facial expressions).	27 100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5.00	0.00	Excellent
Overall Average						4.69	0.17	Excellent

Artistic and nonverbal skills appeared universally strengthened, as reflected in the overall average weighted mean of 4.69 ($SD = 0.17$), rated Excellent. The highest ratings were observed in drawing, painting, coloring, and other art skills ($WM = 5.00$, $SD = 0.00$), positive self-perception related to talents and abilities ($WM = 5.00$, $SD = 0.00$), and effective use of nonverbal communication, such as body language and facial expressions ($WM = 5.00$, $SD = 0.00$). These results indicate that repeated opportunities to participate in talent

showcases provided learners with consistent opportunities to demonstrate their abilities, express themselves, and communicate through artistic and nonverbal forms. This finding is supported by Mason et al. (2008), who reported that arts-based activities can assist students with disabilities in demonstrating academic, cognitive, social, and artistic skills, suggesting that meaningful engagement in the arts can provide opportunities for learners to demonstrate competencies that may not be as readily expressed in conventional classroom settings. Jang (2020) likewise found that participation in an art-integrated movement program was associated with improved self-expression among children with intellectual disabilities, with self-expression contributing positively to aspects of self-efficacy. This supports the present finding that repeated opportunities for artistic expression and performance may contribute to the development of learners' confidence and ability to communicate their abilities. Social confidence and audience connection also improved markedly, particularly in performing before an audience and interacting with audience members before and after performances. This pattern is further supported by Buragohain (2026), whose study found that dance activities involving children with complex needs contributed to improvements in communication, self-confidence, and social integration. Dance, vocal performance, and verbal expression received Good ratings, with weighted means of 4.19 (SD = 0.39) for dance and singing and 4.19 (SD = 0.39) for communication with peers and adults, suggesting that these complex skills require more targeted instruction and practice time. In contrast, interaction with audience members received an Excellent rating (WM = 4.89, SD = 0.32), while nonverbal communication received the highest possible rating (WM = 5.00, SD = 0.00). Overall, the findings suggest that repeated showcase participation was particularly associated with the development and demonstration of artistic expression, nonverbal communication, social confidence, and audience interaction, while dance, vocal, and verbal communication skills may benefit from continued structured practice and individualized support. This interpretation is also consistent with Kallitsoglou et al. (2026), who found that participation in a school-based creative dance workshop was associated with significant improvements in self-esteem among children with special educational needs and disabilities, further indicating the potential value of structured creative-performance activities in supporting positive learner development. These findings should, however, be interpreted as teacher-observed skill development within the study setting and should not be taken as evidence of definitive causal effects.

Research Question 3: How do these activities relate to observed academic engagement and social interaction?

Four themes emerged from focus group discussions: (1) Improved motor control and attention: practice appeared to strengthen coordination, posture, and focus; (2) Greater motivation: learners became more eager to attend school and participate; (3) Visible confidence growth: shy learners began smiling, standing taller, and expressing pride after receiving applause; (4) Peer connection: group rehearsals fostered cooperation, friendship, and a sense of belonging.

The findings indicate that the talent showcase activities were associated with positive changes in learners' academic engagement and social interaction. Four themes emerged from the focus group discussions: improved motor control and attention, as repeated practice appeared to strengthen coordination, posture, and focus; greater motivation, as learners became more eager to attend school and participate in activities; visible confidence growth, as previously shy learners began smiling, standing taller, and expressing pride after receiving applause; and peer connection, as group rehearsals fostered cooperation, friendship, and a sense of belonging. These qualitative observations suggest that the benefits of repeated talent showcase participation extended beyond performance itself and were reflected in learners' everyday participation and interactions. The findings are consistent with Jang (2020), who reported that art-integrated movement activities can support self-expression and self-efficacy among children with intellectual disabilities, suggesting that structured creative activities may provide opportunities for learners to develop confidence while actively engaging with others. Similarly, Mason et al. (2008) emphasized that arts integration can provide learners with disabilities opportunities for meaningful participation, expression, choice, and social engagement. More recent research by Kallitsoglou et al. (2026) also reported positive effects of a school-based creative dance intervention on self-esteem and school well-being among children with special educational needs and disabilities, supporting the present observation that creative and performance-based activities may contribute to broader positive experiences within the school environment. Thus, the present findings suggest that repeated, low-pressure opportunities to demonstrate ability and receive affirming recognition may nurture not only confidence and self-esteem but also motivation, attention, participation, and peer relationships. However, because the qualitative findings are based on teacher observations and focus group discussions from a single setting, these relationships should be interpreted as observed associations rather than definitive causal effects.



Ethical Considerations

Academic records were accessed only with proper authorization and handled in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173). Ethical clearance was formally obtained from the Division Research Committee of Antipolo City prior to data collection. Written informed consent was secured from all participating teachers; written permission from parents or legal guardians was obtained for every learner. All data were fully anonymized; no real names or identifiers appear in the report. No learner was directly interviewed or tested; observations were based solely on regular school activities.

Conclusion

Observed across one school year at Antipolo City SPED Center, talent showcases appeared to nurture confidence, celebrate ability, and strengthen social connection. Teachers rated outcomes as Excellent overall, with strongest growth in artistic expression, stage presence, and peer acceptance. Skills requiring complex coordination—dance, vocal performance, and verbal interaction—showed progress but remain areas for targeted support. Qualitative insights suggest repeated, low-pressure participation helped learners overcome hesitation and feel valued. While limited to observer perceptions at one site and not establishing definitive cause-and-effect, these findings indicate that quarterly talent showcases serve as promising inclusive practices aligned with DepEd policy and strengths-based education principles.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, school administrators should consider integrating talent showcases as a regular inclusive practice by providing adequate resources, time, and opportunities for progressive participation, while using structured observation tools to monitor learners' development over time. Teachers should build on learners demonstrated strengths in artistic and nonverbal expression while providing differentiated instruction, individualized support, and additional opportunities for practice in movement, speech, and vocal performance, particularly in areas that received comparatively lower ratings. Parents may further support learners' development by recognizing effort and progress at home and encouraging participation and practice without placing undue emphasis on performance perfection. Given that the present findings are based on teacher observations within a single setting, future research should examine talent showcase participation across multiple sites and longer observation periods and incorporate pre- and post-participation measures, including learner self-reports and other appropriate outcome indicators, to provide stronger evidence regarding changes in confidence, self-esteem, academic engagement, and social interaction. Such research may also help determine whether the observed benefits are sustained over time and whether the outcomes vary according to learners' characteristics, types of disability, or forms of talent showcase participation.

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