

The Relationship Between Teacher Attitude and Self-Efficacy for Inclusive Practices in Turkey

Osman Özokcu

Correspondence: Osman Özokcu, Faculty of Education, Inonu University, Malatya, Turkey.

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the relationship between Turkish teachers' attitudes and their self-efficacy for inclusive practices using a relational survey design. Study participants included a total of 1163 preschool, classroom, subject-matter, and special-education teachers from four different geographical regions in Turkey. The data was collected using the Sentiments, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education Scale (SACIE-R) and the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP) Scale. The data were analyzed using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and Multiple Linear Regression tests with the help of SPSS. The results reported a positive significant relationship between teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy for inclusive practices. Results also revealed teacher self-efficacy to be a significant predictor of their attitudes towards inclusive education.

Keywords: inclusive education, attitudes, self-efficacy, teacher, Turkey

1. Introduction

Recently the global trend of educational inclusion and the provision of education for all has seen children from different social backgrounds being increasingly integrated into general education systems worldwide (UNESCO, 2009). Inclusive education is considered as somewhat of a reform act that aims to eliminate all barriers to the integration of every child into the general education system, regardless of their differences and social backgrounds. The inclusion concept reflects an understanding that accepts, values, and respects variety and differentiation among all people and aims to improve school systems for every individual (Ainscow, 2005).

Despite the long history of inclusive education practices in developed countries, only in the last 25 years have integration practices caught the attention of researchers and parents in Turkey. The regulations and implementations regarding inclusive education in Turkey were first practiced in 1983, though many practicable difficulties were encountered (Sucuoglu, 2004). Since Special Education Regulation 573 came into effect in Turkey and several other countries, inclusive education practices have gained momentum (Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE), 1997). Even though there has been a shift from the use of the term "integration" to use of the term "inclusion" globally, in Turkey, the term "mainstreaming education" has been used in its place. Turkey is a large country with a population of 80 million people; individuals under the age of 18 constitute 40% of the total population. According to data from 2017, the number of school-age individuals in Turkey is nearly 18 million (MoNE, 2017). According to the MoNE's 2017 data, only 25% of school-age disabled students pursue their education. The number of inclusive students attending primary and secondary school is about 300,000 (MoNE, 2017).

Despite all the legal regulations, it is obvious that, based on observations made by researchers in research studies, it is obvious that inclusion has not been widely accepted in Turkey, and that it has not provided the anticipated benefits. The reason behind this may be attributed to the fact that the success of inclusive education is based on many different factors. It may be claimed that, of these, the most important is that of teachers. Since it has been realized that the most basic factor that affects success regarding the inclusion of students with special needs is a positive attitude from teachers (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Parasuram, 2006).

Existing research has revealed that the attitudes and expectations of teachers have a direct effect on students' learning and development (McLeskey & Waldron, 2006; Forlin, Cedillo, & Romero-Contreras, 2010). Additionally, researchers have reported that the disabled teachers' positive attitudes and beliefs towards students in the inclusion environments is related to considerably improved inclusion practices and better student output (Berry, 2010, Blecker & Boakes, 2010, Darling-Hammond, 2006; Rakap, & Kaczmarek, 2010; Rakap, Parlak-Rakap, & Aydin, 2016). It is believed that the

teachers who have a positive attitude towards inclusion are able to use educational strategies in general education classes more effectively and they feel sufficiently competent in terms of meeting the requirements of students with special needs and adapting the curriculum and materials accordingly (Campbell, Gilmore, & Cuskelly, 2003). On the contrary, it has been observed that the teachers who have a negative attitude towards inclusion have lower expectations and decrease the learning opportunities for children (Idol, 2006; Shade & Stewart, 2001).

Many studies have been conducted to investigate the attitudes of teachers towards inclusion. Some of these studies revealed that certain teachers had a positive attitude towards the inclusion of children with special needs (Avramidis, Byliss, & Burden, 2000; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Kargin, 2004; Park & Chitiyo, 2011; Sari, 2007; Sucuoglu, 2004; Secer, 2010). Conversely, other researchers have revealed that form teachers have a negative attitude towards inclusion (Avramidis & Kaylva, 2007; Diken & Sucuoglu, 1999; Gozun & Yikmis, 2004; Rakap & Kaczmarek, 2010; Sahbaz & Kalay, 2010). A few studies have concluded that teachers have neither a negative nor a positive attitude towards inclusive education (Engstrand & Roll-Pettersson, 2012; Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001 Ross-Hill, 2009; ; Sari, Celikoz, & Secer, 2009; Sucuoglu, Bakkaloglu, Iscan, Demir, & Akalin, 2013).

In their review of the literature, Avramidis and Norwich (2002) mentioned that teacher attitudes towards integration/inclusion were affected by various factors. These factors included: (a) teacher-related factors, such as age, gender, teaching experience, the level of learning regarding receiving special education training; (b) student-related factors, such as the child's inability type and nature; and (c) environmental factors, such as the availability of support staff and educational materials. One of the factors that affect the success of teachers in the inclusion practices is the teachers' self-efficacy perceptions (Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012).

According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy belief can be defined as an individuals' judgment regarding their success in using certain abilities. The concept has an important place in social learning theory; it describes an individual's belief regarding their organization and performance of particular of activities and actions, and their success therein (Bandura, 1984). Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs have an important influence on their principled practice regarding successful inclusive practices (Paneque & Barbetta, 2006; Sharma, et al., 2012). In inclusionary classes, successful education depends on teachers' beliefs towards the responsibilities and disabilities of children with special needs (Jordan, Schwartz, & McGhie-Richmond, 2009). Additionally, it is stated that teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy use more effective teaching strategies and are more insistent regarding those students who show less interest in academic activities (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001). On the contrary, teachers with lower self-efficacy levels spend more time on non-academic tasks and inhibit the students' learning by using ineffective teaching strategies (Savolainen, Engelbrecht, Nel, & Malinen, 2012; Sharma, et al., 2012).

Previous research in the field has revealed that a positive relationship exists between self-efficacy and attitude towards inclusion applications. Wiesel and Dror (2006) stated that Israeli primary school teachers with higher self-efficacy levels had a more positive attitude towards inclusion applications. Soodak, Podel, and Lehman (1998) found a significant relationship between the American general-education teachers' self-efficacy and their attitude towards inclusion. In addition to these studies, Savolainen et al. (2012) reported a significant positive relationship between Finnish and South African teachers' self-efficacy regarding cooperation, and their attitude towards the inclusion of the disabled children. Similarly, Malinen, Savolainen, and Xu (2012) found a positive correlation between the Chinese teachers' attitude towards inclusion and their self-efficacy. Similarly, Sokal and Sharma (2014) revealed that there was a positive significant relationship between Canadian teachers' attitudes and their self-efficacy. In summary, it can be observed that teachers' self-efficacy regarding inclusion is the strongest factor when trying to determine their attitudes towards inclusionary education. Hence, revealing the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their attitudes towards inclusion will help researchers and teachers alike to make inferences regarding future studies that may help to develop positive attitudes towards inclusion.

On investigation of the research findings on teachers' views and attitudes towards inclusive education in Turkey, it can be concluded that a majority of studies were investigating teacher attitudes towards inclusion applications. However, despite legal regulations regarding inclusion applications being made, studies on these applications are quite limited (Rakap & Kaczmarek, 2010). First and foremost, this study aimed to determine the relationship between teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education and their efficacy; secondarily, it aimed to determine the beliefs of teachers and their level of prediction regarding attitudes. This study seeks answers to the following questions.

1.1 Research Questions

1. What is the strength of the relationship between Turkish teachers' self-efficacy and their attitudes regarding inclusive education?
2. To what extent does Turkish teachers' self-efficacy predict their attitudes toward inclusive education?

2. Methodology

2.1 Model of the Study

A relational survey design was used in the study to investigate the relationship between teachers' efficacies and attitudes regarding inclusive education (Buyukozturk, Cakmak, Akgun, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2009).

2.2 Participants

The scales that were to be used as data collection tools were mailed to selected principals administrating 2000 teachers from 100 different schools across different regions of Turkey. The data were collected from a total of five cities, Malatya, Ankara, Bolu, Izmir, and Eskisehir situated among four geographical regions. Participants were randomly selected among schools from participating cities and the scales were mailed to the preschool, classroom, subject-matter, and special-education teachers. Of the 2000 teachers contacted, 1242 completed the survey package and returned them to their principals. The teachers answered the scale with a success rate of 58.15%. Overall, 80 scales were excluded due to incorrect or incomplete answers; therefore, a total of 1163 scales were included in the study. The distribution of participants according to their subject matter is as follows: 4% were preschool teachers, 38% were classroom teachers, 25.1 % were subject-matter teachers, and 8.5% were special-education teachers; 62.8% of the participants were females and the remaining 37.2% were males.

2.3 Data Collection Tools

The Sentiments, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education Revised (SACIER-R) Scale developed by Forlin, Earla, Loreman, and Sharma (2011) and adapted into Turkish by Bayar, Ozaskin, and Bardak (2015) were used in order to determine the teachers' attitudes regarding inclusive education. The scale contained 15 items and four point Likert-type items' scores obtainable per the scale ranged from 15 to 60. An individual's high score on the scale indicates that the sentiments, attitudes, and concerns of that individual regarding inclusive education are of a high level. The scale consists of three sub-dimensions: sentiment, attitude, and concern. Five items are included in each sub-dimension with a maximum and minimum score of five and twenty, respectively. The Cronbach Alpha coefficients of reliability were found to be .88 for the entire scale, and .86, .88, and .85 for the sub-dimensions, respectively. These values indicated that this scale is reliable and that it may be used for further studies.

The Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice Scale (TEIP) was developed by Sharma, Loreman, and Forlin (2012) to determine preservice teacher efficacies regarding inclusive education. The scale comprised a total of 18 and six-point Likert-type items. Scored obtainable per the scale ranged from 18 to 108. The TEIP is comprised of three subscales: Efficacy in Inclusive Instruction (IE), Efficacy in Managing Behavior (BE), and Efficacy in Collaboration (CE). A high average-score on the scale indicates a more positive tendency and high self-efficacy and, to a lesser extent, anxiety. The scale was adapted and its reliability tests were conducted by Bayar (2015). The Cronbach Alpha coefficients of reliability were found to be .89 for the entire Turkish form of the scale, and .88, .90, and .86 for the sub-dimensions, respectively.

2.4 Procedure

Permission for this study was granted by the MoNE, and all the scales used herein were mailed to the principals of the schools. The principals provided the scales for the teachers who were a volunteer to participate in the study and returned the scales by mail. After the elimination of those scales that were either incorrectly or incompletely filled in, the data obtained from a total of 1163 scales were transformed to the computer environment.

2.5 Data Analysis

SPSS software was used in the study to analyze the data. The following statistical tests were used in the study: The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation test used to test the significance of the relationship between the teachers' self-efficacy and attitudes towards inclusive education; and the Multiple Linear Regression test to determine whether teacher self-efficacy is a significant predictor of their attitudes regarding inclusive education (Buyukozturk, 2005).

3. Results

This section presents the results of the regression and correlation analyses regarding teachers' efficacies of inclusive education practices and their attitudes towards inclusive education.

3.1 Analysis of the Relationship Between the Teachers' Efficacies of Inclusive Education Practices and Their Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education

A correlational analysis was conducted in order to answer the research question: What is the Level of Relationship between Teacher Self-efficacy and Teacher Attitudes regarding Inclusive Education? The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The results of the correlation analysis

	Efficacy	CE	BE	IE
Attitude	.277*	.273*	.225*	.257*

* $p < .05$

As can be seen in Table 1, a positive significant relationship was found between the teachers' scores on the attitude scale, and teachers' scores on the efficacy scale and the scales various sub-dimensions. In addition, this relationship was determined to be highest between the attitude scores and the CE sub-scale scores.

3.2 The Regression Analysis Regarding the Teachers' Attitudes

A regression analysis test was conducted in order to determine whether teacher self-efficacy was a significant predictor of teachers' attitudes regarding inclusive education. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The results regarding the regression analysis

Variable	B	S.H.B	β	T	p	Paired r	partial r
Constant	28.059	1.122	-	25.011	.000	-	-
Efficacy in collaboration	.134	.061	.107	2.174	.030	.257	.064
Efficacy in managing Behavior	.023	.055	.019	.425	.671	.225	.012
Efficacy in inclusive instruction	.214	.056	.078	3.821	.000	.273	.112

$R = .283$, $R^2 = .080$, $F(3-1159) = 33.673$, $p = .000$

As seen in Table 2, a low level of significance was found among teachers' self-efficacy in collaboration, self-efficacy in managing behavior, and self-efficacy inclusive instruction together with their attitudes regarding inclusive education ($R = .283$, $R^2 = .080$, $p < .000$). The aforementioned three variables explain the 8% of the total variance.

According to the standardized regression coefficient (β) results (Table 2), the importance of the predictive factors on the scale scores is in the order of CE, IE, and BE, respectively. Considering the t-test results regarding the significance of the regression coefficients, it was determined that the scores for CE and IE are significant predictors of the teachers' attitude scores; however, the BE score was not determined to be a significant predictor of the teachers' attitudes.

4. Discussion

This study investigated the relationship between the teachers' self-efficacy for inclusive practices and attitudes regarding inclusive education. The results of the study revealed a significant relationship between the teachers' self-efficacy and attitudes regarding inclusive education, and that teacher efficacy is a significant predictor teacher attitude regarding inclusion; hence, self-efficacy was shown to be an important variable explaining teachers' attitudes.

This study investigated the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy for inclusive practices and teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. The results indicated a significant positive relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. This result is consistent with that of other studies in the field, including Weisel and Dror (2006), Malinen et al. (2012), and Savolainen et al. (2012). Results from previous studies suggest that teacher self-efficacy is among the most important predictors of positive attitudes regarding inclusive education. Similarly, the results of this study determined that teachers' positive attitudes are related to high self-efficacy beliefs. This result implies that the attitudes of teachers who consider themselves competent in implementing inclusive education practices with students with special needs are also positive. Furthermore, self-efficacy in collaboration was found to be the most important predictor of the teachers' attitudes. Therefore, factors such as teachers' collaboration with their colleagues and parents, cooperative planning, and peer learning can be said to be crucial determinants of the success of inclusion practices. This result highlights the contribution made by high efficacy regarding inclusive education to the development of positive attitudes regarding inclusive education.

The extent to which teachers' self-efficacy could be used to predict their attitudes regarding inclusive education was the second investigative purpose of this study. According to the results, teachers' self-efficacy predicted significantly their attitudes on inclusion at a low level. This indicates the effect of the teacher efficacy on their attitudes regarding inclusion. The studies conducted by Malinen et al. (2012) and Yada and Savolainen (2017) assert that efficacy is an important predictor of attitudes regarding inclusion. According to their results, a teacher with a high self-efficacy is expected to display attitudes regarding inclusive education practices. Approximately 8% of the variance regarding teachers' attitudes towards inclusion was explained by self-efficacy, however, such a low percentage implies that self-efficacy only explains a small part of the attitudinal variance. This study failed to provide an explanation for the

vast majority of the statistical variance of its results. Future studies could employ a different, effective data collection procedure to explain this variance.

Another finding of this study was that teachers' collaboration abilities are among the strongest predictors of their attitudes regarding inclusive education. Some studies conducted on this issue—such as Malinen et al. (2012) and Savolainen et al. (2012)—also found a positive significant relationship between teachers' efficacy in collaboration inclusion and their attitudes regarding inclusive education. This result of the current study can imply that the teachers consider collaboration with other stakeholders within their school an important factor in carrying out inclusionary teaching practices.

This study has two main limitations. The data were collected using random sampling techniques from among five different cities across four geographical regions in Turkey. Consequently, the results of this study are not generalizable to all Turkish teachers. This study used a cross-sectional analysis, thus data were collated from a random sample in only one session and analyzed. For this reason, the relationship between the teachers' efficacy and attitudes should be interpreted according to a particular paradigm.

Some suggestions can be made according to the study's results. The study determined that teachers consider collaboration with other stakeholders in the school as an important factor regarding inclusive education practices. Therefore, those training programs aiming to increase teacher competency regarding inclusive education can be included as part of in-service training programs organized by the MoNE. The researchers suggest that more qualitative studies can be conducted in order to reveal more in-depth reasons for teachers' attitudes regarding inclusive education. Additional longitudinal studies to investigate the variance in the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and attitudes regarding inclusion are also recommended to better understand this phenomenon.

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