EDUCATORS' ATTITUDES AND COLLABORATION WITH PARENTS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE PRACTICES IN PRESCHOOL INSTITUTIONS

Blerta ALILI[1], Festina FETAHU[2]

[12] Faculty of Pedagogy, University of Tetova
Corresponding author: Blerta Alili

Abstract

This study examined the role of educators' attitudes towards inclusion and their collaboration with parents of children with special needs in the implementation of inclusive practices in preschool institutions. The study used a quantitative approach with a sample of 100 educators from public and private preschool institutions. Data were collected through a structured 21-item questionnaire covering demographic characteristics, educators' attitudes towards inclusion, inclusive practices, and collaboration with parents. The instrument demonstrated good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.833$). Linear regression was used to examine the relationship between educators' attitudes and inclusive practices, while Pearson's correlation was used to examine the relationship between collaboration with parents and inclusive practices. The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 4.795$, $p = 0.001$), and educators' attitudes explained approximately 16.8% of the variance in inclusive practices. The importance attributed to inclusion ($B = 5.983$, $p < 0.001$) and the perceived development of empathy ($B = 0.232$, $p = 0.014$) were significant positive predictors, while not all attitude dimensions showed the same pattern. Therefore, the first hypothesis was partially supported. In contrast, collaboration with parents showed a very weak positive correlation with inclusive practices ($r = 0.019$), which was not statistically significant ($p = 0.850$). Thus, the second hypothesis was not supported. The findings highlighted the importance of educators' attitudes in strengthening inclusive practice while indicating that parent collaboration alone did not explain variation in the implementation of inclusive practices in the studied preschool institutions.

Keywords: inclusive education; children with special needs; preschool institutions; educators' attitudes; parent collaboration

1. Introduction

Inclusive education in early childhood is based on the recognition that all children have the right to access, participate in, and benefit from quality education. Inclusive practices aim to remove barriers to participation and learning and to respond to children's diversity within the regular educational environment. The literature reviewed in the study emphasized that inclusion is influenced not only by institutional arrangements and resources but also by educators' attitudes, professional preparation, and the quality of pedagogical practices (Bukayeva, 2020; Kryvoruchko & Shevchenko, 2021).

Preschool institutions may face limited professional preparation, insufficient material and human resources, and uneven professional support for the implementation of inclusive practices. Educators' perceptions and attitudes therefore represent an important component of the process. Previous work has also highlighted the importance of professional development and preparation of preschool teachers for working with children with special educational needs (Kolosova et al., 2019; Goncharenko et al., 2022; Manić, 2023).

At the same time, collaboration between educators and parents is commonly considered an important component of inclusive education. Cooperation can support communication, shared understanding of children's needs, and parental participation in educational planning. However, the presence of collaboration does not necessarily mean that inclusive practices will be implemented at a higher level if institutional support, professional preparation, and other contextual conditions are insufficient (Levitsky & Havrilov, 2025).

The present study focused specifically on two research assumptions. The first hypothesis (H1) stated that more positive educators' attitudes towards inclusion would positively influence the

implementation of inclusive practices in preschool institutions. The second hypothesis (H2) stated that there would be a positive and statistically significant relationship between the level of educators' collaboration with parents of children with special needs and the level of inclusive practices in preschool institutions. The purpose was to examine these relationships empirically among preschool educators.

2. Methodology

The study employed a quantitative research approach. The sample consisted of 100 educators working in public and private preschool institutions. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed on the basis of the study objectives and contemporary literature on inclusive education.

The questionnaire contained 21 items organized into four sections: demographic information; educators' attitudes towards inclusion; inclusive practices; and collaboration with parents of children with special needs. The attitude, inclusive-practice, and parent-collaboration sections used a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The internal consistency of the instrument was good, with Cronbach's alpha of 0.833 for the 21 items.

For H1, linear regression analysis was used to examine whether dimensions of educators' attitudes towards inclusion predicted the implementation of inclusive practices. For H2, Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated to examine the relationship between educators' collaboration with parents and inclusive practices. Statistical significance was evaluated at $p < 0.05$.

3. Results

3.1. Results related to H1

The regression model examining educators' attitudes towards inclusion and the implementation of inclusive practices was statistically significant ($F = 4.795$, $p = 0.001$). The study reported that educators' attitudes explained approximately 16.8% of the variance in inclusive practices. The findings therefore indicated that attitudes represented a relevant factor in the implementation of inclusive practices, although they did not explain all variation in practice.

Attitude dimension	B	p	Interpretation
Importance of inclusion	5.983	<0.001	Positive and statistically significant
Benefit from a shared environment	-0.649	0.010	Statistically significant, negative coefficient
Development of empathy	0.232	0.014	Positive and statistically significant
Professional preparation	-0.064	0.083	Not statistically significant

Two attitude dimensions showed positive statistically significant associations with inclusive practices: the perceived importance of inclusion ($B = 5.983$, $p < 0.001$) and the perceived development of empathy ($B = 0.232$, $p = 0.014$). The "benefit from a shared environment" dimension was statistically significant but had a negative coefficient ($B = -0.649$, $p = 0.010$),

while professional preparation was not statistically significant (B = -0.064, p = 0.083). On the basis of the statistically significant regression model and the different effects of the attitude dimensions, H1 was considered partially supported.

3.2. Results related to H2

The relationship between educators' collaboration with parents of children with special needs and the level of inclusive practices was examined using Pearson's correlation. The analysis showed a very weak positive correlation (r = 0.019) between the two variables. However, the relationship was not statistically significant (p = 0.850; N = 100). Therefore, the data did not support the assumption that a higher level of collaboration with parents was associated with a statistically significant increase in the implementation of inclusive practices. H2 was not supported.

Variables	Pearson r	p
Parent collaboration – Inclusive practices	0.019	0.850

4. Discussion

The findings indicated that educators' attitudes towards inclusion were relevant to the implementation of inclusive practices. The statistically significant regression model and the contribution of specific attitude dimensions suggested that how educators perceived the importance of inclusion and its contribution to children's empathy was associated with stronger implementation of inclusive practices. At the same time, the finding that attitudes explained approximately 16.8% of the variance indicated that attitudes were only one component of the broader process. Institutional policies, professional support, training, and available resources may also influence implementation.

The results concerning collaboration with parents were different from the expectation expressed in H2. Although the direction of the correlation was positive, its magnitude was almost zero and the relationship was not statistically significant. The finding suggested that collaboration with parents, as measured in this study, could not by itself be considered a major explanatory factor for differences in inclusive practices. The original study proposed that the structure and consistency of parent collaboration, institutional support, professional preparation, and other contextual factors may help explain this result. This interpretation was consistent with the study's broader emphasis on the interaction between individual and institutional conditions.

5. Conclusions

The study showed that educators' attitudes towards inclusion were associated with the implementation of inclusive practices in preschool institutions. H1 was partially supported: the regression model was statistically significant, and some dimensions of educators' attitudes were significant predictors of inclusive practices, while other dimensions were not. In contrast, H2 was not supported because the relationship between parent collaboration and inclusive practices was very weak and statistically non-significant.

The findings supported the importance of strengthening educators' understanding of inclusion and providing continued professional development focused on inclusive pedagogical practices. They also indicated that collaboration with parents should be considered within a wider institutional and professional framework rather than as an isolated factor. Further research

could examine how the quality, structure, and consistency of collaboration with parents interact with professional training, institutional support, and available resources.

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