

Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Education: The Role of Job Stressors and Demographic Parameters

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Abstract

The pedagogy of inclusion is the current trend for the education of persons with disabilities. This study investigated teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in relation to demographics (gender and age) and their occupational stress levels. The research involved 208 primary and secondary school teachers, working in urban and suburban areas of five prefectures of Greece. Two scales were used for data collection: a) The Opinions Relative to the Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI), which examines the attitudes of teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream schools and b) a questionnaire with regard to Teachers' Occupational Stress, which detects specific sources of stress in the workplace. Teachers' gender, age and occupational stress served as independent variables. Teachers demonstrated marginally positive attitudes towards inclusion, which were correlated with their age. Specifically, younger teachers expressed more positive attitudes than their older colleagues. However, no differences were detected between men and women. Furthermore, relatively high levels of stress were observed, while the specific stressors were detected. Finally, teachers' attitudes were partly correlated to occupational stress, as less positive attitudes towards inclusive education were associated with increased levels of stress.

Keywords: *inclusive education; teachers' attitudes; teachers' occupational stress*

Introduction

In recent decades inclusive education has redefined the schooling of persons with disabilities. The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) attempted to meet the 'education for all' demand, which can only be satisfied through the inclusion of all students in the general school. According to this Statement, the general school with inclusive orientation combats discrimination, creates open communities and helps to develop an inclusive society. The differences among people are recognized as normal and each child has specific characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs, while the emphasis should be on strengths rather than deficits. Therefore, schooling should be actualized in accordance with the specific needs of each child, rather than attempting to adapt them in the specifications of the existing curriculum (Peters 2007; UNESCO, 1994).

In Greece the integration of certain groups of students has been established and implemented but with questionable success (Zoniou-Sideri, Deropoulou-Derou, Karagianni & Spandagou, 2006). Specifically, the Greek law provides for the education of students with disabilities and special educational needs into the mainstream school in various ways as follows: (a) with the support of the general education teacher in cooperation with the state *Center for Differential Diagnosis, Diagnosis and Support (KE.D.D.Y.)*, (b) with the parallel support of a special educator in case of more severe special educational needs, (c) with attendance at the Special Integration class, taught by a special educator for a number of lessons weekly and (d) by the presence of the special auxiliary personnel for students who confront difficulties in taking care of themselves, for example due to physical disabilities. There is, however, a significant number of students who attend special schools, since it is considered that they cannot be served by the mainstream structures.

Clearly, the institutional reforms are a precondition to appropriately serve students with special needs in mainstream schools. However, the success of inclusive education seems to depend significantly on the active participation of teachers. The behavior of educators, their way of working, the theoretical background they follow and their specific teaching practices are critical factors which can enhance or undermine the integration process. Therefore, positive perceptions of teachers are deemed to be necessary and indeed an important starting point for the development of a suitable inclusive school environment (Leung & Mak, 2010; Parasuram, 2006).

The adoption of positive attitudes has been found to be affected by a variety of educators' characteristics, such as gender, age, experience and education. However, in addition to demographic data, the formation of perceptions may be influenced by other factors, such as occupational stress. Numerous investigations have identified the teaching profession as being particularly stressful, which has negative consequences not only for teachers themselves, but also within the educational process. Teachers experiencing stress usually have to cope with anxiety and depression, which disturb their teaching ability. Furthermore, the correlation of occupational stress to low levels of job satisfaction affects the teachers' willingness and could act as an obstacle to the integration process. Therefore, identifying the specific stressors is deemed necessary to successfully deal with stress and its negative consequences.

The purpose of this study is to identify teachers' existing attitudes with respect to inclusive education, to detect the factors affecting them. More specifically, we posed the following questions:

- What are teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education?

- What is the impact of teachers' gender and age in shaping perceptions?
- Do the participants cope with occupational stress?
- Is there a correlation between teachers' attitudes and their occupational stress?

Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education

Teachers' perceptions have been a topic of research in almost every developed country. There are numerous studies that demonstrate the reluctance of teachers and their insecurity in the implementation of integration policy, even when it is a state law. The overview of Boer, Pijl and Minnaert (2011) showed that the majority of teachers adopt neutral or negative attitudes regarding inclusive education. In like manner, a survey by Rakap and Kaczmarek (2010) showed on average a 'slightly negative attitude' towards inclusive education of the participating teachers. Moreover, Sari, Çeliköz and Seçer (2009) concluded that the educators participating in their study were '*undecided*' on the idea of inclusion of students with disabilities.

In contrast, there are numerous research attempts that present slightly positive to very positive teachers' attitudes: A meta-analysis by Avramidis and Norwich (2002), although incorporating relatively dated research (1984-2000), resulted in positive outcomes in the sense that perceptions of teachers are supportive towards inclusion. However, teachers seem to partially support inclusion, since they express their opposition to the inclusion of each and every student and suggest specific training for certain student groups. The findings of the aforementioned literature review are confirmed by more recent studies (Haq and Mundia 2012; Khochen and Radford 2012).

Additionally, a number of studies suggest that the teachers' agreement with the philosophy of integration in theory and their willingness to teach these students may be quite distant from the application of inclusive education in practice, where the role of the state is dominant. The meager government grant, which leads to deficits in personnel and equipment, seems to cause uncertainty among teachers (Koutrouba, Vamvakari & Theodoropoulos 2008; Memisevic & Hodzic 2011; Zoniou-Sideri & Vlachou, 2006). A further adverse factor is the concern of teachers with regard to their own ability, and the appropriateness of schools, to develop an inclusive learning environment (Shevlin, Winter & Flynn 2013). Nevertheless, there are cases where teachers report that inclusion is being successfully implemented in their school (Humphrey & Symes, 2013) and their attitude is identified as 'very positive' (Jerlinder, Danermark & Gill, 2010).

Factors influencing the attitudes of teachers

According to the existing literature, teachers' attitudes differ as a result of various variables. Gender and age are the key demographics controlled in each and every investigation. Women usually reflect more positive opinions in comparison with men (Tsakiridou & Polyzopoulou, 2014; Vaz et al., 2015). Regarding age, the youngest and the oldest teachers seem to express the most positive perceptions regarding inclusion (Parasuram, 2006; Rakap & Kaczmarek, 2010). However, there are several studies that fail to detect differences based on the participant's gender or age (Avramidis, Baylis & Burden, 2000; Jerlinder et al., 2010). Moreover, educational experience has been found to enhance the tolerance of teachers (Emam & Mohamed, 2011), while previous teaching experience of students with disabilities seems to be a

decisive factor for positive opinions. The implementation of an inclusive practice or being in contact with people with disabilities appears to help teachers to familiarize with them and consequently shape positive attitudes towards inclusion (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007; Batsiou et al., 2008; Kurniawati et al., 2012).

Teacher training is also significant, since teachers educated in Special Education tend to be more positively disposed towards inclusion (Ghanizadeh, Bahredar & Moeini, 2006; Sari, 2007). Small differences are found in relation to the grade they teach, where primary education teachers are found to represent more positive opinions (Ross-Hill, 2009). Moreover, perceptions of teachers have been linked to self-efficacy, in view of teachers with high self-efficacy levels expressing more positive attitudes (Avramidis et al., 2000; Emam & Mohamed, 2011; Lambe, 2011; Tsakiridou & Polyzopoulou, 2014; Vaz et al., 2015). Educators' willingness is also measured as an independent variable in research with regard to teachers' perceptions. Namely, positive perceptions of teachers have been associated with elevated levels of willingness and their acceptance of even the most severe forms of disability (Monsen, Ewing, & Kwoka, 2014; Rakap & Kaczmarek, 2010).

The factor of working stress has been remotely studied in reference to the perceptions of teachers. However, during interviews performed as part of an investigation by Sukbunpant, Arthur-Kelly & Dempsey (2013) stress was repeatedly cited as a deterrent to the implementation of inclusion. The lack of cooperation with parents and the extra workload caused by teaching a child with special needs in the general class were mentioned as sources of stress that contribute to negative attitudes towards integration. In contrast, Monsen et al. (2014) in a study which included a stress scale for teachers (based on Galloway's Teacher Stress Scale), identified no statistically significant correlation between perceptions and the degree of stress experienced.

Teachers' occupational stress

Occupational stress is a common problem in a variety of professions, while teachers are among those who experience the highest stress levels (Johnson et al., 2005). In the teaching profession occupational stress is defined as an experience that includes negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, emotional stress, frustration or depression as a result of some aspects of their profession (Kyriacou, 2001). The levels of stress as well as the specific stressors affecting them have been studied amongst general and special educators in numerous countries.

Occupational stress in the implementation of inclusive education

Forlin (2001) studied the factors that may cause stress to teachers in the implementation of inclusive education. According to research results, the vast majority are concerned by the simultaneous management of students with disabilities and other members of the class. The lack of time, the students' behavioral problems and the acceptance of a disabled student by his classmates, were a few indicative issues that concerned the teachers. Additionally, the lack of training in inclusion and special education issues was found to be stressful to a large number of teachers. 91% of respondents questioned the appropriateness of the training to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities. However, the stress of teachers remained generally low, whereas previous experience and adequate training in the integration process appeared to be extremely helpful in reducing stress.

In a study by Engelbrecht, Swart & Eloff (2001) stressors affecting the inclusion of students with Down syndrome in the general school were investigated. Teachers reported their inability to fulfill the educational needs of students in the absence of specialist support as a key source of stress. A similar survey was conducted regarding the integration of mental disability (Engelbrecht et al., 2003), where teachers showed high levels of stress. The main stress sources were identified within five key categories, namely '*administrative issues*', '*support*', '*behavior of the learners*', '*the teacher's perceived self-competence*', and '*the parents of the learners with intellectual disabilities*'. Nonetheless, the levels of stress appeared to be diminished in cases where teachers had previous experience in inclusive school environments.

Unlike results presented research on job stress of teachers towards integrating pupils with physical disabilities (Eloff, Swart & Engelbrecht 2002). Teachers showed limited and to great extend non-existent stress, which indicates that students with physical disabilities can be easily included in mainstream schools. Summarizing the above, we observe that with regard to inclusive education, teachers are primarily concerned with the diverse educational needs of their students, the lack of training combined with the absence of the necessary multidisciplinary support and the low state funding. The aforementioned reasons create insecurities and cause stress to teachers.

Comparison of occupational stress for teachers of special and general school

A number of studies have focused on the occupational stress of special educators, particularly in detecting differences compared to teachers employed in mainstream schools. In Lazarus (2006) study the stress experienced by special educators was characterized as low to moderate, though it was higher than teachers employed in general schools. The main sources of stress were associated with organizational issues, such as the lack of information on the situation management, limited supervision and a lack of cooperation among colleagues.

In contrast, are the findings of Kalyva (2013), who examined the effect of teaching students with special needs on the extent of stress expression. Accordingly, participants who had experience of teaching students with disabilities expressed lower stress levels. This was attributed to the working conditions of special educators in Greece, who take smaller classes and have a more flexible curriculum compared with their colleagues in the mainstream school. Pepe and Addimando (2013) studied stress as a result of experiencing '*challenging behaviors*' of certain students in primary school. According to the results, general teachers reported by 80% '*externalizing behaviors*' as the most stressful, while the rate for special education teachers was only 57%. The latter included in second place, students with '*weak character*' that need increased attention. It is worth noting that in Italy there is full inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream school, so this difference is attributable to heterogeneity of the requirements of each specialist while operating in the same environment.

The findings above differ in part from research by Williams and Gersch (2004), where no significant deviation was observed in the overall levels of stress among teachers of general and special schools in Great Britain. There was however a difference in the sources of stress, as the teachers of general school reported students

(fuss, unwillingness, lack of time for each), while the special educators were mainly concerned with insufficient equipment.

Methodology

Participants

The sample of this study consisted of 208 general teachers (71.6% women and 28.4% men) employed in public primary (77%) and secondary education (23%) schools of urban and suburban areas in Greece. More than 65% of teachers who participated were over 40 years old. Furthermore, the vast majority of participants (73.6%) had at least ten years of teaching experience. Regarding training in the field of special education, 43.8% of the teachers had not received any specific training in this field, 42.8% had taken part in conferences and short term courses, 5.8% had participated at long term seminars, 5.3% were retrained and specialized in Special Education and 2.4% possessed a Master Degree in Special Education.

Methods

A two-scale questionnaire was used for the survey that consisted of:

a) A Greek adaptation of ‘Opinions Relative to the Integration of Students with Disabilities’ (ORI) (Antonak and Larrivee 1995; Larrivee and Cook 1979) scale to investigate the perceptions of teachers on inclusive education. The scale consists of 25 items to which teachers are required to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement on a six-point Likert-type scale, where -3 corresponds to ‘I disagree very much’ and +3 to ‘I agree very much’. The calculation of the total score results in a value of between 0 and 150. A score that exceeds the minimum of 75 points indicates positive attitudes.

b) The ‘Teachers’ Occupational Stress’ scale (Antoniou, Polychroni & Vlachakis 2006), which consists of 30 statements referring to job stressors. Teachers evaluate the level of stress they experience on a six-point Likert-type scale, where 1 corresponds to ‘it is not stressful at all’ and 6 to ‘it is very stressful’. The factor analysis indicated four major occupational stressors, explaining 50.82% of the cluster: a) the management and the behavior of students ($\alpha = 0.874$), b) working conditions ($\alpha = 0.613$), c) teachers’ workload ($\alpha = 0.827$) d) support and recognition by the state ($\alpha = 0.726$)

Finally, teachers completed questions with regard to demographical issues and working parameters, such as gender, age, years of teaching experience and training in the field of Special Education.

Procedures

The survey was conducted during January and February 2016. The questionnaires were distributed to schools with the consent of the directors. Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous. Of the 250 distributed questionnaires 208 were answered fully, yielding a 83.2% response rate. Data analysis was performed using the statistical package SPSS for Windows (ed. 22). Multiple statistical tests were conducted, namely frequencies, regression analysis, factor analysis, t-tests and univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Results

Teachers' attitudes towards inclusion

To ascertain the teachers' attitudes towards inclusion the total score of the ORI was calculated for every participant. The reliability of the measurement using the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was $\alpha=0.77$ for the 25 items, which indicates that the sample had reached a satisfactory level of reliability. The score ranged from 24 to 119 ($M=76.44$ $S.D.=15.47$). A narrow majority (57.2%) obtained the minimum score of 75 points, suggesting that 42.8% of respondents expressed negative perceptions. The factor analysis did not lead to satisfactory results, so the total score was used, according to the recommendations of the authors, and the average value on individual items.

The examination of the mean and standard deviation of the score for the individual items of the scale showed the items to which the participants mostly agreed or disagreed. Specifically, 93.7% of teachers expressed some degree of agreement with the position that the inclusion of students with SEN requires 'systematic and continuous training of teachers of general class', while the vast majority (89.3%) agreed and that 'the education of pupils with SEN is best done by special educators rather than by teachers of general education'. Correspondingly, 84.6% of teachers disagreed that the general class teachers have sufficient training to teach students with SEN, confirming the above aspects.

However, three out of four teachers recognized that inclusive education 'allows the interaction of a mixed group, which fosters understanding and acceptance of diversity among students' by partly or totally agreeing with this statement. This attitude is confirmed by the high disagreement with the opposite proposition, where eight out of ten teachers showed their disagreement with the item 'the presence of students with SEN in the general class does not promote the acceptance of diversity by the other students'.

Additionally, teachers acknowledged the benefits of inclusion in the social and emotional development of students with disabilities, by indicating a strong disagreement with the proposals that the isolation in the special class has a positive impact on social and emotional development of students with SEN (85.5%) and the inclusion of students with SEN does not promote their social independence (83.1%). Furthermore, 70% of teachers disagreed with the view that the behavior of pupils with SEN would constitute a negative example to other students. Finally, 89.4% of teachers stated that pupils with SEN should be given every opportunity to participate in the general class, whenever possible. Nevertheless, a significant number of participants (70%) expressed their concern about the behavior problems that are likely to be expressed by pupils with SEN in the general classroom.

To test whether the participants' perceptions were influenced by their gender we performed a t-test for independent groups. The analysis showed that there were no statistically significant differences in the total score of the participants that could be explained by their gender ($t = .724$, $df = 206$, $p = .470$). In contrast, age was found to influence the views of teachers. The univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed statistically significant differences related to teachers' age: $F(3.204)=3.543$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = .050$. More specifically, the Bonferroni test showed that teachers aged under 30 years had a statistically significant higher score on the ORI scale compared to the 41-50 years group ($p < 0.05$).

Occupational stress

For the 'Teachers' Occupational Stress' scale the average score of the responses was calculated individually for each participant. The internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for Teachers' Occupational Stress scale for 30 items was $\alpha = .90$, indicating a satisfactory level of reliability for the scale. The score ranged from 1.83 to 5.63 ($M = 3.65$, $S.D. = .71$). It was identified that teachers experience relatively high stress levels as the average score was found to be close to 4, indicating the existence of stress. 'The lack of time for personal engagement with students' ($M = 4.26$, $S.D. = 3.35$) and the 'severe lack of resources and equipment' ($M = 4.24$, $S.D. = 1.17$) were found to be the two main stressors. Generally, the stressors associated with *the lack of support and recognition from the state* and *the workload* proved to be mostly associated with increased stress (Table 1).

Table 1. Means for the occupational stress factors

Occupational stress factors	M
Behavior and management of students	3.73
Working conditions	3.15
Workload	3.82
Support and recognition from the state	3.84

Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education and their occupational stress

In the next stage of the statistical analysis, the relationship between teachers' attitudes and their occupational stress was studied, in order to check whether the existence of occupational stress affects the perceptions expressed by teachers. However, the independent samples univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) at $p < 0.05$ level did not reach results that allow the correlation between the two variables (Table 2).

Table 2. ANOVA results for the differences in score of teachers in the ORI and the working stress in the individual stressors

Stress factors	M	SD	F (61.146)
Behavior and management of students	3.73	.835	1.069
Working conditions	3.15	.879	.726
Workload	3.82	.926	.866
Support and recognition of the State	3.84	.854	.864

However, the Pearson correlation coefficient showed several correlations of the stress components and the total ORI score (Table 3).

Table 3. Statistically significant correlations of stressors and the total ORI score

Stress factors
The integration of students with special needs
Imposing discipline and the noise in the classroom
Too much time spent on certain children
The large number of students in the classroom
The effect on my personal life
The adherence of the program

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was conducted to predict teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education by gender, age and the four main stress factors. By using SPSS we performed three separate regression analysis (Table 4). According to the results, perceptions of teachers were associated with their age $b = -.189$, $t = -2.76$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .031$ and concrete perceptions were more positive in younger ages. Finally, regarding occupational stress the analysis showed that teachers who experience more stress in relation to the 'behavior and management of students' are expected to have more negative attitudes on integration $b = -.260$, $t = -2.64$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .032$.

Table 4. Regression analysis to predict teachers' attitudes by gender, age and occupational stress

Predictors
• Gender
• Age
• Behavior and students management

Working conditions
Workload
Support and recognition from the state
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Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Discussion

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the opinions of teachers regarding the inclusion of students with special needs in the general school. Additionally, the gender and age of teachers, as well as their occupational stress levels were examined as predictors of their expressing attitudes. According to the statistical analysis teachers participating in the study expressed marginally positive opinions towards inclusive education. Precisely, 57.2% of participants supported the idea of inclusion constituting the narrow majority of the sample. This result confirms previous research (Hsieh & Hsieh, 2012; Koutrouba et al., 2008; Memisevic & Hodzic, 2011), where the teachers' attitudes were likewise characterized as marginally positive and around 50% of the sample supported inclusive education. However, such comparisons could be considered unsafe due to the different methodology used in each survey. For this reason, it is interesting to compare the results to other studies that used the same measurement, indicating the average score on ORI. In Turkey, Rakap and Kaczmarek (2010) found "slightly negative" perceptions, as the rating of teachers on the ORI scale averaged 70.70 with a standard deviation of 19.35. This slight divergence could be explained by differences in the socio-economic and cultural level between Greece and Turkey. Sari et al. (2009) considered teachers to be 'undecided' on inclusive education based on the ORI results, which could confirm the two subsequent surveys.

Focusing on the agreement or disagreement of the participants with specific scale items it could be argued that teachers recognize the benefits of inclusion for both SEN students and their classmates. The social and emotional development of students with SEN is considered to more successfully occur in the mainstream class and promote their independence. Accordingly, the acceptance of diversity through the interaction of a mixed group of students is a key advantage for all participants in the integration process. A significant portion of teachers agreed, therefore, that SEN students should be given the opportunity to become actively involved in the general classroom activities. However, a considerable number of teachers appeared cautious towards behavioral problems displayed by SEN pupils and thus questioned the appropriateness of their training to work in an inclusive environment. This result is in agreement with previous research findings, which supported the inclusion in theory, but expressed reservations as to the application of it (Haq & Mundia, 2012; Khochen & Radford, 2012; Koutrouba et al., 2008; Memisevic & Hodzic, 2011; Zoniou-Sideri & Vlachou, 2006).

Regarding demographics affecting the perceptions of teachers, no significant differences in attitudes were found between men and women. This finding confirms the research of Avramidis et al. (2000), Boer et al. (2012), Jerlinder et al. (2010), Memisevic and Hodzic (2011) and Parasuram (2006). In contrast, differences were

detected in respect of teachers' age. Teachers belonging to the younger age group obtained higher scores and therefore express more positive attitudes, as found in previous research (Parasuram 2006; Rakap & Kaczmarek, 2010). These findings could be interpreted as a result of the better training, which they are expected to have. The revision of the undergraduate curriculum by including special education issues enhances their educational level and familiarizes the graduates with the school reality. In addition, exhaustion and burnout in older age groups is likely to hamper the implementation of inclusive education and the adoption of positive attitudes towards it.

Another variable that has been extensively studied is the occupational stress of teachers. According to the findings, participating teachers showed relatively high levels of stress, as indicated in their response to specific stressors. The main source of stress was found to be the lack of individual time for each student, related to the workload and the large number of students in the class, which was also found among the common stressors. Additionally, the severe lack of resources and equipment is mainly due to lack of funding, especially during the economic crisis, making it difficult to position the educational and causes stress symptoms. Corresponding results are presented in previous studies from different countries, where teachers seem to face the same difficulties (Antoniou et al., 2006; Antoniou, Polychroni, & Kotroni, 2009; Betoret, 2006; Clipa & Boghean, 2015; Liu & Onwuegbuzie, 2012; Manthei et al., 1996; Richards, 2012; Travers & Cooper, 1993).

Regarding the relationship between attitudes and occupational stress, the results could be considered ambiguous. On the one hand, the perceptions of teachers were not directly linked to the working stress of teachers, as revealed by the analysis of variance in both scales and therefore validated the results of Monsen et al. (2014). However, there is evidence indicating the relationship of negative attitudes towards inclusive education with increased stress levels, confirming the claims of teachers in research interviews (Sukbunpant et al., 2013).

Regression analysis revealed that the stress caused by the behavior and management of students was a predictive factor of negative attitudes of the participating teachers. This component can be construed as the belief that inclusive education requires considerable effort, skills and appropriate training on behalf of the teacher to adapt the environment to the particularities of the student. It is expected that teachers instructed by the potentially "difficult" behavior of students will have difficulties managing such behaviors and appear more hesitant in implementing inclusive education.

The research hypothesis is further confirmed from the review of statistically significant correlations found between perceptions and individual stressors. Firstly, negative perceptions were associated with stress caused by 'the integration of students with special needs'. It could therefore be concluded that negative perceptions of teachers could be partly explained due to stress caused by the process of integration. Stress from 'imposing discipline and noise in the classroom' was also associated with more negative perceptions and thus could be seen as challenges teachers have to face to a greater extent during the inclusive education process. A significant number of studies ensures the aforementioned assumption (Alghazo & Gaad, 2004; Cook, 2001; Khochen & Radford, 2012; Koutrouba et al., 2008; Lifshitz, Glaubman, & Issawi, 2004).

Additionally, the relationship of stress caused by 'too much time spent on some children' could also be justified. The lack of specialized educational personnel support, significantly burdens the teacher who has to devote increased time in order to include a student with special needs. '*Overcrowded classrooms*' are highly connected to the above statement for which the state is responsible. Overcrowded classes hinder the educational work, when the teacher is forced to follow the "*average*" student and '*the need for adherence to the program*' leaves no room for individualized instruction, constituting another source of stress. In general, we observe that the lack of support from the state on special educators and support staff, as well as for technical equipment and infrastructure are obstacles to the implementation of the inclusion process (Khochen & Radford, 2012; Koutrouba et al., 2008; Lambe, 2011).

Finally, the stress caused by 'the impact of the profession in personal life' was also associated with less positive attitudes. Teachers who fail to separate their personal life from their professional life appear to present difficulties in managing demanding situations generally in everyday work. By extension, the psychological damage might contribute to their ability to effectively implement the integration policy. Therefore they are negatively disposed to it.

To sum up, the absence of statistically significant differences between the ORI and occupational stress scales could be a result of the tools used. The occupational stress scale includes factors that cause stress in general in the workplace of teachers. However, given the relationship found between certain elements of the scale with the perceptions of teachers, the construction of a more specialized tool is proposed. Using a scale to measure the occupational stress caused by the inclusive education and students with disabilities may present important findings on the relationship of stress perceptions and thus the implementation of inclusive education. The limitations of this research are mainly related to the relatively small number of teachers and their unequal distribution in the individual groups (primary-secondary). It is subsequently recommended to conduct further research for extensive comparisons between those groups. Detection of specific factors causing stress in the inclusion process could be a tool for the development of counseling and the support of educational programs.

Moreover, the reference to a large number of disabilities in the context of this research is consistent with the idea for 'education for all', but is another limitation of the study. Teachers were asked to state their views considering students with various disabilities. However, it appears that the nature of disability should be more extensively considered as a variable. Consequently, it is proposed to investigate the attitudes and problems faced by teachers regarding the inclusion of specific groups of students. This specialization could highlight the needs of specific groups and have a significant effect on the inclusion within the general school.

In conclusion, the finding of even 'marginally positive' attitudes is an important starting point, which gives optimism for inclusive education despite all the adversity and deterioration of the education system in recent years. Future research could focus on ways to improve the working conditions of teachers to address the factors that cause stress and enable the successful implementation of inclusive education.

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