



PREDICTING THE READINESS FOR INCLUSIVE TEACHING: AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC TRAITS, TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOL CULTURE

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The aim of this research was to examine the readiness for inclusive teaching. The study was implemented in 2021 with 621 (521 female) primary school teachers in Croatia, using a multidimensional questionnaire with high reliability. Our findings established gender as a predictor of the readiness for inclusive teaching, with female teachers reporting significantly higher levels of readiness for inclusive teaching ($p < 0.05$). Participants from schools with stronger inclusive culture and support, that reported higher satisfaction with prior inclusive education, professional development activities and more inclusive teaching experience, reported significantly more positive attitudes about their readiness for inclusive teaching. Teacher education and professional development were not established as significant predictors of the readiness for inclusive teaching. Our study established both "Inclusive school culture" and "Inclusive school support" as positive predictors of the readiness for inclusive teaching.

Keywords: *inclusion; teaching; school culture; professional development*

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Introduction¹

Inclusion is a cornerstone of a just and equitable society, fostering social cohesion, economic opportunity, and cultural richness. Throughout history, movements for inclusion have reshaped societies, breaking down barriers and ensuring that marginalized communities have equal access to rights, resources, and representation. As a promotional mechanism, inclusive education is an important topic for the pedagogical and social context, because it is a prerequisite and a valuable school resource in providing quality education through the acceptance of student diversity.

Since the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994), mainstream schools with an inclusive orientation have been recognized as one of the most effective mechanisms for challenging discriminatory attitudes, fostering an inclusive society, and promoting educational equity. Inclusion is concerned with identifying and removing potential barriers to presence (attendance, access), meaningful participation, growth from an individual starting point, and feelings of connectedness and belonging for all students and community members, with a focus on those at particular risk of marginalisation or exclusion (Ainscow *et al.*, 2006; Forlin *et al.*, 2013). The advancement of these principles was further supported by the development of the Index for Inclusion, a comprehensive evaluative framework that enables schools to incorporate the perspectives of staff, students, and parents in the refinement of policies and practices (Booth and Ainscow, 2011). This framework conceptualizes educational inclusion as an ongoing process that ensures equitable learning opportunities for all students, necessitates the restructuring of school culture and pedagogical practices to accommodate student diversity, and situates inclusive education within the broader context of social inclusion across three key dimensions: cultural, policy, and practice-based transformations. Deku and Vanderpuye (2017) emphasize that teachers are one of the most critical factors influencing the advancement and development of education. However, educational reforms frequently fail due to insufficient consideration of existing pedagogical practices and the specific demands placed on

¹ The empirical results presented in this paper are based on a PhD thesis research by one of the authors.

educators responsible for their implementation. Research indicates that many teachers lack the necessary training to effectively support students with disabilities in developing academic, social, and adaptive behaviours (Hayford, 2013). These findings underscore the impact of teachers' limited knowledge, expertise, and potentially negative attitudes on their comprehension and application of inclusive education principles (Gyamfi and Yeboah, 2022). Empirical studies suggest that teachers' perceptions and attitudes constitute the most significant barrier to the successful implementation of inclusive classroom practices (Carrington *et al.*, 2019). While educators generally express support for the inclusion of diverse student populations, particularly those with social, emotional, or behavioural challenges, the practical realization of inclusive education remains a persistent challenge (Hornby, 2014).

Research on teachers' preparedness to work with students with disabilities has primarily focused on examining their attitudes toward inclusive education and assessing its impact on the social interactions of students with special educational needs in school settings (De Boer *et al.*, 2011; Cagran and Schmidt, 2011). A lack of adequate preparation for inclusive education has been shown to negatively affect teachers' confidence and perceived self-efficacy in addressing the diverse needs of students with disabilities within mainstream classrooms (Forlin and Chambers, 2011). From a national perspective, the earliest studies on teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities and their readiness for inclusive teaching in Croatia were conducted approximately two decades ago. These studies identified teachers' competencies and attitudes as essential prerequisites for the successful implementation of inclusive education. The findings indicated that while teachers were generally willing to accommodate students with disabilities in their classrooms, they required additional institutional support and professional development. Notably, their positive attitudes were primarily directed toward partial rather than full inclusion (Kiš-Glavaš *et al.*, 1997). The motivation for conducting this research arises from the observed discrepancies between teachers' declarative support for inclusive education and their actual readiness to implement inclusive practices in the classroom. Although numerous studies indicate that most teachers express positive attitudes toward the concept of inclusion, they often encounter challenges in practice that hinder ef-

fective implementation (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; Forlin, 2010). These challenges include insufficient professional preparation, limited resources, time constraints, and a sense of uncertainty when working with students with diverse educational needs (Sharma *et al.*, 2012). Personal practical experiences in working with Croatian teachers have further confirmed the existence of a gap between theoretical beliefs and everyday pedagogical practice. This discrepancy highlights the need for a deeper understanding of the factors influencing teacher readiness for inclusion, as well as for identifying the types of support that would enable more effective implementation of inclusive education in schools. More recent studies, however, suggest a growing trend toward greater acceptance, increased support, and more positive attitudes regarding inclusive education (Kudek Mirošević and Jurčević Lozančić, 2014; Skočić Mihić *et al.*, 2016; Vinković, 2021). Teachers' attitudes toward special education are largely influenced by their level of knowledge and understanding of the field. Research indicates that educators with greater familiarity with inclusive education principles exhibit more positive attitudes toward its implementation (Abbas *et al.*, 2016). The concept of teachers' readiness for inclusive education encompasses their knowledge, comprehension, skills, abilities, and attitudes toward inclusive pedagogical practices. Empirical studies consistently emphasize that teachers' preparedness for inclusive education is a critical determinant of the successful integration of students with special educational needs. The presence of a complex interplay of psychological and professional competencies, which mutually reinforce one another, enables educators to engage in teaching at a high motivational and value-driven level. This, in turn, facilitates the effective organization of the educational process in elementary schools in accordance with inclusive education principles. Furthermore, the extent to which students recognize and accept their own differences, as well as their ability to empathize, support, and collaborate with peers, is significantly influenced by the role of their elementary school teacher (Movkebayeva *et al.*, 2016, p. 4681). Researchers emphasize that a fundamental prerequisite for the effective implementation of inclusive education is the preparation of competent teachers who possess the necessary skills and readiness to work with students with disabilities (Alekhina *et al.*, 2011; Karynbaeva *et al.*, 2017; Karynbaeva *et al.*, 2019). Empirical studies indicate that

educators who have received specialized training in special education are more likely to incorporate inclusive practices into their teaching and exhibit more favourable attitudes toward inclusive education (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002). Likewise, teachers with extensive experience in working with students with disabilities tend to demonstrate more positive attitudes toward inclusion compared to those with limited experience. Despite these findings, there is no universally accepted framework defining teachers' readiness for inclusive education or the specific professional competencies required for teaching students with disabilities (Movkebayeva *et al.*, 2013, p. 550). Similarly, the Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications (2005) highlight the evolving demands of a knowledge-based society, emphasizing the critical role of teachers in facilitating inclusive education. Within this framework, teachers are expected to develop key competencies, including: (a) fostering cooperative and value-driven relationships with students and colleagues; (b) acquiring digital competencies to effectively integrate technology into teaching and learning; and (c) engaging with society by promoting student mobility, fostering intercultural awareness, and identifying common ethical values within an inclusive knowledge society. Ensuring the promotion of inclusion through teacher education programs remains a significant challenge and an essential priority for 21st-century education (Ball and Tyson, 2011). Florian and Linklater (2010, p. 371) assert that teachers may experience uncertainty when addressing specific learning difficulties or adapting instructional methods; however, this should not be equated with a deficiency in teaching abilities, knowledge, or skills. Consequently, a primary objective in the advancement of inclusive schools and educational systems is the enhancement of inclusive teacher education and training (Florian, 2012), the promotion of learning from differences (Messiou *et al.*, 2016), and the facilitation of teacher collaboration (Vangrieken *et al.*, 2015). Livingston and Flores (2017) conducted a longitudinal analysis of teacher education trends spanning four decades, providing insights into relevant themes, contextual considerations, and research methodologies. Their findings highlight the significance of teachers' professional identity, learning needs, and working environments in shifting the perception of educators from being undervalued professionals to recognized agents of change (Livingston, 2014). Additionally,

research has emphasized the importance of professional socialization for new teachers, underscoring the need for structured support systems, mentorship, and practical induction processes to facilitate identity formation and workplace learning opportunities (Flores, 2017). The areas of proximal development and teacher support have been identified as crucial factors in leveraging developmental opportunities through daily professional interactions (Jamero, 2019). However, significant concerns persist regarding the practical feasibility of inclusive education, the demands placed on classroom teachers, the adequacy of support provided to students, and the level of expertise required for effective inclusion (Botha and Kourkoutas, 2016). Empirical evidence further suggests that a high level of teacher self-efficacy is essential for the successful implementation of inclusive education programs for students with disabilities (Tümekaya and Miller, 2020).

Materials and methods

Research aim and problems

The aim of this research is to examine the readiness for inclusive teaching. The research problems were focused on studying the predictive significance of socioeconomic variables, inclusive teaching experience, teacher education and professional development quality, as well as the role of the inclusive school culture and support in researching the teachers' readiness for inclusive teaching.

Hypotheses

Based on the aim and objective of the research the following hypotheses were formed:

H1: Sociodemographic traits are significant predictors of the readiness for inclusive teaching

H2: The quality of teacher education and professional development positively predicts the readiness for inclusive teaching

H3: School support for inclusive teaching positively predicts the readiness for inclusive teaching

H4: Inclusive teaching experiences and inclusive school culture positively predict the readiness for inclusive teaching.

Participants

The research was implemented during the 2020/2021 academic year with 621 primary school teachers in the Osijek-Baranja County, Croatia. The sample covers 26.35% of the total population of primary school teachers in the Osijek-Baranja County. There were 521 female (83.9%) and 94 male participants (15.1%), aged 20 to 65 (20–29, 10.1%; 30–39, 25.4%; 40–49, 29.1%; 50–59, 28.2%; 60 and older, 6.3%). The research was approved by both the National Agency for Education and the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia.

Instrument

A questionnaire was constructed for the purpose of this research. It had initial items on sociodemographic traits and three constructed sub-questionnaires with statements related to inclusion using a five-point Likert-type scale. In order to ensure high reliability of the scale, the Cronbach's alpha value was calculated for each individual scale of the survey questionnaire which demonstrated good validity and reliability. The first part of the questionnaire for teachers had questions on the socio-demographic traits (age, gender, education, field of work, work experience, profession, assistance of experts in working with special needs students, prior experience of working with students with special needs, development of individualized educational programs).

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of the *Readiness for inclusive teaching* scale that was constructed for the purpose of this research according to relevant references (Vinković, 2021; Kudek Mirošević and Jurčević Lozančić, 2014; Rudelić *et al.*, 2013; Skočić Mihić, 2011). The obtained value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test was $KMO = 0.935$, and the Bartlett test of sphericity was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 7465,895$ $ss = 136$, $p < 0.01$). Two retained factors explained a total of 62.02% of the variance. However, according to Cattell's Scree plot test, based on the one factor extracted, it explained a total of 54.76% of the variance. The obtained factor was named *Readiness for inclusive teaching* and consisted of 17 items (1. *I am able to monitor the implementation of individualized educational programs for students with special needs*; 2. *I am capable of creating an individualized educational program for students with special needs*; 3. *I am able to encour-*

age students with special needs to get involved and actively participate in activities; 4. I am able to introduce innovations in the educational process for students with special needs; 5. I can and do work with all students; 6. I am trained to work with students with special needs; 7. I am able to communicate and cooperate with the parents of students with special needs; 8. I know pedagogical documentation related to students with special needs; 9. I am able to identify my own needs and plan personal and professional development and training related to students with special needs; 10. I know the professional literature and critically apply research and recommended practices in the field of inclusive pedagogy; 11. I have confidence in working with students with special needs; 12. I know the features of the “social model” on which the principle of inclusion is based; 13. I am sufficiently informed about the characteristics of students with special needs and how to work with them; 14. I am able to apply assistive technology in working with students with special needs; 15. I am able to apply creative therapy in working with students with special needs; 16. I am motivated to work with students with special needs in the regular classroom; 17. I know the characteristics of creative therapy (dance therapy, art therapy, music therapy, etc.) in the teaching of students with special needs). The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the variable was high ($\alpha = 0.95$).

The third part of the questionnaire consisted of the *School support for inclusive teaching* scale (Kucuker *et al.*, 2006 according to Skočić Mihić, 2011) that had 24 items on the support for inclusive teaching. The obtained value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test in the preliminary factor analysis was $KMO = 0.944$, with the Bartlett sphericity test statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 11563.805$, $ss = 276$, $p < 0.01$). Four latent variables that met the Kaiser criterion (eigenvalues greater than one) were extracted, explaining 68.75% of the variance. However, according to Cattell’s Scree plot test, based on the one factor extracted, it explained a total of 52.48% of the variance. The obtained factor was named *School support for inclusive teaching* and consisted of 24 items on the available forms of support to teachers in working with students with special needs in primary school (1. *Participation and support of families of students with special needs; 2. Have the knowledge and skills to define educational goals for students with special needs; 3. Have the knowledge and skills to assess the development of students with special needs; 4. Have knowl-*

edge of students' difficulties or talents; 5. Have appropriate didactic material and textbooks for students with special needs; 6. Have knowledge and skills on appropriate methods of working with students with special needs and how to apply them in practice; 7. Have respect from others (family, colleagues) in the workplace for their efforts in working with students with special needs; 8. Have the opportunity to attend professional gatherings, conferences on the education of students with special needs; 9. Have positive attitudes of peer families of typical development; 10. Have a smaller number of students in a class that includes a student with special needs; 11. Have professional training in the necessary areas of involvement; 12. Have knowledge and skills on adapting the work plan and program and its implementation; 13. Have technical equipment to support the education of students with special needs (computer programs and videos); 14. Have the knowledge and skills to encourage positive interactions among your children; 15. Physically adapted space for students with special needs (size of space, appropriate place for individual work); 16. Collaborate with professionals working outside the school (speech therapist, educational rehabilitator, doctor, clinical psychologist, etc.); 17. Have positive attitudes of all school staff towards the inclusion of students with special needs; 18. Have knowledge of the laws and regulations related to the inclusion of students with special needs; 19. Have professional development for all school staff in promoting positive attitudes towards students with special needs; 20. Be able to observe teachers with knowledge, skills and experience in working with students with special needs; 21. Have teaching assistants; 22. Have respect for others outside the workplace; 23. Have the support of school management; 24. Have extra time to work with professionals / staff / families). The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the composed variable was high ($\alpha = 0.97$).

The fourth part consisted of the *School Inclusive Culture* scale (Booth and Ainscow, 2002) and had 30 items adjusted from the *Index for inclusion: developing learning and participation in schools* (1. Everyone is made to feel welcome; 2. Students help each other; 3. Staff collaborate with each other; 4. Staff and students treat one another with respect; 5. There is a partnership between staff and parents/carers; 6. Staff and governors work well together; 7. All local communities are involved in the school; 8. There are high expectations for

all students; 9. Staff, governors, students and parents/carers share a philosophy of inclusion; 10. Students are equally valued; 11. Staff and students treat one another as human beings as well as occupants of a 'role'; 12. Staff seek to remove barriers to learning and participation in all aspects of the school; 13. The school strives to minimise discriminatory practice; 14. Staff appointments and promotions are fair; 15. All new staff are helped to settle into the school; 16. The school seeks to admit all students from its locality; 17. The school makes its buildings physically accessible to all people; 18. All new students are helped to settle into the school; 19. All forms of support are co-ordinated; 20. 'Special educational needs' policies are inclusion policies; 21. The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice is used to reduce the barriers to learning and participation of all students; 22. Teaching is planned with the learning of all students in mind; 23. Lessons encourage the participation of all students; 24. Lessons develop an understanding of difference; 25. Students are actively involved in their own learning; 26. Students learn collaboratively; 27. Student difference is used as a resource for teaching and learning; 28. All students take part in activities outside the classroom; 29. School resources are distributed fairly so that they support inclusion; 30. Classroom discipline is based on mutual respect). The obtained value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test in the factor analysis was $KMO = 0.944$, and the Bartlett test of sphericity was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 14707.802$, $ss = 435$, $p < 0.01$). According to Cattell's Scree plot test, one factor was extracted, explaining a total of 53.28% of the variance. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the composed variable was high ($\alpha = 0.96$).

A new variable, *Inclusive teaching experience* was composed. The participants reported their prior inclusive teaching activities on 4 items (1. *I worked with inclusive populations; 2. I taught in inclusive classrooms; 3. I worked based on an individualised inclusive programme; 4. I had expert counselling and help in inclusive teaching*). The obtained value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test in the factor analysis was $KMO = 0.632$, and the Bartlett test of sphericity was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 302.512$, $ss = 6$, $p < 0.01$). According to Cattell's Scree plot test, one factor was extracted, explaining a total of 45.53% of the variance. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the composed variable was adequate ($\alpha = 0.64$).

An additional variable, *Inclusive teacher education and professional development* was composed. The participants reported their general satisfaction on 8 items (1. *The general quality of teacher education for inclusive teaching*; 2. *The number of theoretical lessons for inclusive education*; 3. *The number of practical lessons for inclusive education*; 4. *The applicability of acquired knowledge in the teaching practice*; 5. *The contribution of the teacher training programme in developing inclusive teaching competences*; 6. *The contribution of the teachers' professional development activities in developing inclusive teaching competences*"; 7. *The quality of professional development for inclusive teaching*; 8. *The contribution of professional development activities in developing key inclusive teaching competences*). The obtained value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test in the factor analysis was $KMO = 0.887$, and the Bartlett test of sphericity was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 5258.082$, $ss = 28$, $p < 0.01$). According to Cattell's Scree plot test, one factor was extracted, explaining a total of 71.39 % of the variance. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the composed variable was high ($\alpha = 0.94$).

Procedure

The survey was implemented from October to December 2020 in primary schools in the Osijek-Baranja County, Croatia. The participants were informed on the research aim and instructed on the questionnaire with guaranteed anonymity. The data was analysed using SPSS v.20 (Armonk, NY, United States) with descriptive and inferential statistical procedures.

Data analysis

A 3-model hierarchical regression analysis was implemented. The first model consisted of sociodemographic factors: gender, age, level of education, teaching area (Model 1). The second model had two items: "Quality of teacher education and professional development" and "Inclusive teaching experience" (Model 2). Model three consisted of 2 items, "Inclusive school support" and "Inclusive school culture".

Legend: Education lev. (teacher educational attainment); ITE (inclusive teacher education); IPD (inclusive professional development); Inc. teach. ex. (inclusive teacher experience); Inc. sch. cult. (inclusive school culture); School supp. (inclusive school support)

Our regression analysis on the “Readiness for inclusive teaching” (Table 1) established “Gender” ($p < 0.05$), “Inclusive teacher education and professional development” ($p < 0.001$), “Inclusive teaching experience” ($p < 0.01$), “Inclusive school support” ($p < 0.01$) and “Inclusive school culture” ($p < 0.01$) as positive predictors. Female teachers reported significantly higher levels of readiness for inclusive teaching. “Inclusive teacher education and professional development” positively predicted the “Readiness for inclusive teaching”, as well as “Inclusive teaching experience”, “Inclusive school support” and “Inclusive school culture”. Participants from schools with stronger inclusive culture and support, that reported higher satisfaction with prior inclusive education, professional development activities and more inclusive teaching experience, reported significantly more positive attitudes about their readiness for inclusive teaching.

Discussion

The first hypothesis (H1) assumed sociodemographic variables were significant predictors of the readiness for inclusive teaching. Our findings established *gender* as a predictor of the readiness for inclusive teaching, with female teachers reporting significantly higher levels of readiness for inclusive teaching ($p < 0.05$). No significant predictive effects for *age*, *education level* and *teaching level* were found in relation to the “Readiness for inclusive teaching”, “Inclusive teaching experience”, “Inclusive school support” and “Inclusive school culture”. Similar previous studies found the teachers’ age had either no association with their attitudes towards inclusion (Avramidis *et al.*, 2000; Chhabra *et al.*, 2010), or more often, younger teachers felt slightly more positive towards inclusion than more experienced teachers (Batsiou *et al.*, 2008; Ahmmmed *et al.*, 2014; Saloviita, 2018). Also, there were no significant differences between men and women regarding their perceived readiness to deal with diversity. However, women seem to be more confident in their competence, as they show less need for preparation in address-

ing the diversity of needs in their disabled students, and in promoting inclusive education (Triviño-Amigo *et al.*, 2022). Ecoben (2019) pointed out the significant effect of age on awareness, knowledge and skills in relation to the teachers' readiness for the implementation of inclusive education.

The second hypothesis (H2) assumed the quality of teacher education and professional development were predictors of their readiness for inclusive teaching. Surprisingly, our findings did not establish teacher education and professional development as significant predictors of the readiness for inclusive teaching. However, some studies have shown that teachers who are additionally trained to teach students with disabilities feel safe enough to include these students in their class. In general, they had more positive attitudes towards inclusive education (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002), and those teachers who had significant experience in teaching children with disabilities reported more positive attitudes towards inclusion than their less experienced counterparts (Avramidis *et al.*, 2000; Avramidis and Kalyva, 2007). As teachers' learning is directly influenced by their social, cultural or professional environment and their professional identity, expert development is maintained by constant reflection and reassessment through which teachers build their roles and relationships with others (Korhonen and Torma, 2016). Their professional beliefs about the role of inclusive education significantly determine competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) and educational behaviour (Korthagen, 2004). The third hypothesis (H3) assumed school support for inclusive teaching was a predictor of the readiness for inclusive teaching. Our results established "Inclusive school support" as a positive predictor of the readiness for inclusive teaching, and are in line with a study by Mlinarić *et al.* (2016), which provides an insight into the problems encountered by teachers, such as classes with a large number of students who hinder quality work, the willingness to work with students with disabilities, motivation and training of teachers, as well as the accessibility of professional associates, working conditions and the number of teaching assistants. According to the OECD TALIS survey (International Learning and Teaching Survey, 2013) conducted in Croatia, an average of 63% of Croatian teachers worked in schools that lacked special education teachers (the TALIS average being 48%). The levels of participation in training programs teachers needed the

most were moderate (46%), even though one of the first such programs were precisely the teaching of students with disabilities (Braš Roth, 2014). Compared to TALIS 2013, Croatian teachers expressed a greater need for professional development in the field of applying ICT skills in education, teaching students with special needs, and the assessment of students in a multicultural and multilingual environment (Markočić Dekanić *et al.*, 2020). Aktan (2021) found that negative teacher attitudes on inclusion arose due to lack of support, material and organizational conditions. The author emphasized insufficient systemic support and cooperation, inadequate infrastructure, large numbers of students in the class, as well as a shortage of professional development opportunities. Similarly, a deficiency of professional cooperation was also found by Lopes and Oliveira (2021) on a sample of 2544 teachers, with recommendations that additional teacher training in special education should be included as part of formal teacher training.

The fourth hypothesis (H4) assumed inclusive school culture is a predictor of the readiness for inclusive teaching. Our results established “Inclusive school culture” as a positive predictor of the readiness for inclusive teaching. Studies demonstrated that the workplace context, including its pedagogical and social atmosphere as a community, was experienced both as a supporting and restricting work-success factor (Tona and Shanks, 2017). However, Kearney *et al.* (2016) found that in classes where teachers provided positive emotional support and evaluative feedback, students had fewer disciplinary problems, were more engaged in class activities and developed more positive interactions. Baker (2006) found that close positive relationships between teachers and students were important for better student adjustment, especially those with disabilities. This was also confirmed by a study on the role of headmasters in the development of school culture and its impact on student achievements (Tonich, 2021). Ramić (2024) conducted a study and investigates which methods Bosnian and Herzegovinian teachers find most effective for supporting students with developmental disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Teachers emphasized the importance of a positive classroom climate, adapting the learning environment, and collaborative learning. They ranked fostering a respectful, empathetic, and encouraging atmosphere as the top strategy—essential for all students, especially those with developmental needs. Encouraging cooperative

activities where students support each other academically and socially emerged as a key strategy.

Towards a conclusion

The aim of this study was to assess teachers' readiness for inclusive teaching, with a particular focus on the predictive significance of socioeconomic variables, inclusive teaching experience, the quality of teacher education and professional development, as well as the influence of inclusive school culture and support on teachers' preparedness for inclusive education. While teacher education and professional development were not identified as significant predictors of readiness for inclusive teaching, the results indicated that participants from schools with stronger inclusive cultures and support—those reporting higher satisfaction with prior inclusive education experiences, professional development activities, and greater inclusive teaching experience—demonstrated significantly more positive attitudes regarding their readiness for inclusive teaching. The findings obtained may be relevant to our educational context and provide guidance to all those involved in inclusive policy and practice in their efforts to find better solutions for improving the conditions for implementing inclusion in schools. An important pedagogical contribution of the study is a set of guidelines for the further development of inclusive practices and support for students, parents, and teachers.

Future research should further explore the complex dynamics of inclusive school culture and support in relation to teachers' readiness for inclusive education. Additionally, it would be valuable to investigate the key factors in teacher training and professional development within the context of promoting effective inclusive educational practices. Future studies could also empirically examine the role of teachers' personal values, preconceived attitudes, institutional motivational strategies, and cost-benefit evaluations in shaping their readiness for inclusive education.

Limitations

One possible shortcoming of this research is that the study was conducted during the COVID 2020 pandemic, rendering caution when considering the results. Several limitations of the current study should be noted. The research sample was moderate; therefore, conclusions of a larger scale and results generalization are out of the scope of this study. In addition, the extent of underreporting or over-reporting of behaviours cannot be determined, although the survey questions demonstrate good intercorrelation reliability. Despite the limitations of not using exclusively standardised scales, one strength of the study was the use of instruments with reliable psychometric properties to measure the teachers' readiness for inclusive education. Since the development of psychometrically sound measures of the readiness for inclusive teaching has been limited, our scales show promising reliability and validity for future research.

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PREDVIĐANJE SPREMNOSTI UČITELJA ZA INKLUZIVNO POUČAVANJE: ANALIZA SOCIODEMOGRAFSKIH OBILJEŽJA, STRUČNOG USAVRŠAVANJA I INKLUZIVNE KULTURE ŠKOLE

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Cilj istraživanja bio je ispitati spremnost učitelja za inkluzivno poučavanje. Istraživanje je provedeno 2021. godine na uzorku od 621 učitelja (N = 521) osnovnih škola u Hrvatskoj, korištenjem višedimenzionalnog upitnika visoke interkorelacijske pouzdanosti. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da je spol prediktor spremnosti za inkluzivno poučavanje, pri čemu učiteljice iskazuju značajno višu razinu spremnosti za inkluzivno poučavanje ($p < 0,05$). Učitelji osnovnih škola koji inkluzivnu kulturu škole procjenjuju pozitivnom, imaju podršku u inkluzivnom radu, zadovoljni su dosadašnjim obrazovanjem i stručnim usavršavanjem te imaju iskustvo inkluzivnog rada iskazuju pozitivnije stavove o inkluziji i spremniji su za inkluzivno poučavanje. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da su inkluzivna kultura škole i podrška učiteljima u inkluzivnom radu pozitivni prediktori spremnosti učitelja za rad s učenicima s teškoćama.

Ključne riječi: inkluzija; poučavanje; kultura škole; stručno usavršavanje