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SOCIO-PEDAGOGICAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC PREDICTORS OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

Abstract

This research aimed to examine whether and how various socio-demographic characteristics of preschool teachers influence their attitudes toward inclusive practice in preschool institutions. The study examined differences in attitudes in relation to age, years of work experience, job position, prior professional development, experience working with children who require additional support, and the perceived level of support needed. The sample included 116 preschool teachers from the preschool institution "Radosno detinjstvo" in Novi Sad. The Multidimensional Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education Scale (MATIES) was used, along with descriptive and inferential statistical methods in the analysis. The study investigated differences in attitudes in relation to age, how many years the person has worked, job position, prior professional development, experience working with children who require additional support, and the estimated level of support the child needs. The results showed that significantly more positive attitudes were found among younger teachers (up to 40 years old) and among those working with children who require a lower level of support. No significant statistical differences were observed for the remaining variables. The findings highlight the importance of generational and practical context in shaping attitudes toward inclusion, and emphasize the need for high-quality professional development and systemic support for preschool teachers in implementing inclusive practices.

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Introduction

In defining inclusion, there are different perspectives, and therefore it is often described through definitions that view it as a political, social, anthropological movement or as a philosophy focused on a single function or dimension of life. Since perspectives on inclusion vary, definitions often frame it either as a political, social, or anthropological movement, or as a philosophy centered on a specific dimension of life. On the other hand, it can be defined as a comprehensive process encompassing different sectors and dimensions of life and society (Šćepanović, 2015). One of the key principles of inclusive education is that all school-age children (regardless of their social, economic, health-related, regional, national, linguistic, ethnic, religious, or other characteristics) have a legal right to quality elementary education and upbringing. Thus, inclusive teaching implies that all students are accepted and integrated, regardless of their background or specific traits, since diversity itself is used as an opportunity for improving the learning process (Petković, 2009). A challenge in the domain of inclusive education that is frequently discussed in the literature is the presence of negative attitudes toward inclusive teaching, which may be conditioned by a wide range of factors. Year after year, research encounters similar findings indicating ambivalent attitudes among primary school teachers and preschool educators toward inclusion, as well as a link between the attitudes of professionals involved in inclusive education and the quality of this process (Maksimović, Jablan & Golubović, 2022; Japundža Milisavljević, Đurić Zdravković & Milanović Dobrota, 2022).

Given that inclusion is an integral part of the educational system, it appears both important and necessary to continuously examine the attitudes of professionals employed in educational institutions (especially preschool ones) toward this form of education, as well as to identify ways to improve their attitudes and the practices they implement in their daily interactions with the children they work with. A key factor in inclusion is the continuous partnership between the preschool institution and the family, as well as raising individual awareness, accepting diversity, and adapting the educational program to the needs and abilities of each child in the group (Bilić, 2023). For such a partnership to be achieved, it seems essential that preschool teachers who implement inclusive programs hold positive attitudes toward inclusion.

Although the topic of attitudes toward inclusive practice has been examined numerous times in scientific research (Dias & Cadime, 2016), context-specific analysis enables a deeper understanding of the real challenges present in practice. Contemporary educational changes require the continuous re-

evaluation of preschool teachers' attitudes, as inclusion is not achieved through one-time solutions but through an ongoing dialogue between theory and practice. Research on preschool teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practice is of exceptional importance, as it provides insight into both the real challenges and the potential for improving inclusive education in early childhood. Understanding these attitudes can contribute to more effective training and support that affirm every child's right to equal access to education.

Inclusive education as a part of the contemporary educational system

Modern education plays an essential role in both social and individual development, as it contributes to social, economic, and cultural progress, and the advancement of human and societal potential and achievements (Andelković, 2013, p. 278). The contemporary approach to education introduces numerous principles and frameworks, such as a competence-based orientation, the use of standards and learning outcomes, and a focus on students' physical, personal, and social development. This holistic approach combines the education and professional development of teachers, individualized approaches to learners, as well as the implementation of innovative teaching and instructional models.

At the core of school system reforms aimed at creating equal opportunities in education lies the idea of social justice and social cohesion, as well as the need for the democratization of society and the recognition of the right to education and the right to participation. A significant outcome of reforming the school system based on these principles is the development and implementation of inclusive education (Ratković, Hebib & Šaljić, 2017, p. 439). With inclusive education, the expression "*a child tailored to the school*" has been replaced by the phrase "*a school tailored to the child*," which is primarily connected to the right to a quality life, education, and upbringing under equal conditions for all children, regardless of the differences that may exist among them. The traditional educational system, which focused on adapting students (children) to schools and preschools, has taken on new characteristics that involve adapting the educational process to the needs, interests, and abilities of children (Sakač & Marić, 2016).

Methodology

The problem addressed in this research relates to the fact that although inclusion is formally present in the preschool education system, its everyday implementation is often burdened with challenges such as inadequate staff preparation, lack of resources and support, ambivalent or negative attitudes of preschool teachers, as well as a lack of understanding of inclusive principles. There is a strong connection between professional attitudes and the way inclusion is carried out in practice. Certainly, positive attitudes encourage openness and creativity when working with children with

developmental difficulties, while negative or neutral attitudes may act as obstacles to achieving inclusive goals.

The subject of the research is preschool teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practice and the connection between their socio-demographic characteristics and their attitudes toward inclusion. The general aim of the research is to determine whether and in what way different socio-demographic characteristics of preschool teachers relate to their attitudes toward inclusive practice in preschool institutions. The operationalization of the set objective is defined through the following research tasks: to examine differences in preschool teachers' attitudes with regard to age, to examine the influence of years of work experience on preschool teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practice, to determine the relationship between experience in inclusive practice and teachers' attitudes, to examine the role of professional development related to inclusive practice in shaping teachers' attitudes, and to analyze how perceived complexity of support influences attitudes toward inclusive practice.

Instruments and methodology

For the purpose of examining preschool teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education, the Multidimensional Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education Scale (MATIES) developed by Mahat (2008) was used. The sample was collected using a survey technique via a Google questionnaire. The survey was conducted in June 2025. The respondents were employees of the preschool institution "Radosno detinjstvo" in Novi Sad. For this research, the cognitive and behavioral subscales were applied, and some items were adapted to refer to the inclusion of all children, rather than specifically children receiving support. The cognitive dimension of the questionnaire includes preschool teachers' beliefs and understanding of inclusive education. The behavioral dimension measures respondents' willingness to take concrete actions in an inclusive environment. The scale uses a five-point Likert model of agreement, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Since some statements were formulated positively and others negatively, the negative items were reverse-coded to enable calculation of a total score reflecting a positive attitude toward inclusion.

The socio-demographic questionnaire consisted of 8 items (gender, years of service, level of education, age, job position, years of experience in inclusive practice, professional development, and level of support). Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to determine differences in attitudes across various variables. The data were processed using the software JASP 0.19.3.

Sample

The research sample consisted of employees of the preschool institution "Radosno detinjstvo" in Novi Sad. Specifically, 116 female participants were surveyed in June 2025 using a Google

questionnaire. Of the total number of participants, 28 (24.1%) were up to 40 years old, while the remaining 88 (75.9%) were over 40 years old. The majority of participants (80.2%) were employed as preschool teachers at the time of the study, while a smaller percentage (19.8%) worked as nurse–preschool teachers. The average number of years of work experience among the participants was 17.41 years ($SD = 10.08$). The participant with the shortest work experience had been employed for 1 year at the time of the study, while the participant with the longest work experience had been employed for 43 years. Most participants in this research had a higher or university level of education (81%), while 19% had completed secondary education.

Results

To examine the presence or absence of statistically significant differences in preschool teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practice depending on their socio-demographic and professional characteristics (age, job position, work experience, participation in professional development, and assessment of the level of support needed for children in the group), independent samples t-test was applied. Scores from the questionnaire measuring teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practice were compared across the five specified criteria.

Table 1

Results of examining differences in preschool teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practice depending on their age

	Attitudes towards inclusive practice	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i>	T test	95% trust interval	
						Lower border	Upper border
Age	Up to 40 years	44.21	6.74	.01	2.39	.82	8.76
	Over 40 years	39.42	9.88				

Note: M – mean; SD – standard deviation; p – significance level;

Based on the data presented in Table 1, it can be concluded that there are statistically significant differences in attitudes toward inclusive practice with respect to the age of preschool teachers. The mean values of the two analyzed groups show that teachers aged up to 40 have statistically significantly more positive attitudes toward inclusive practice compared to teachers older than 40.

Table 2

Results of examining differences in preschool teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practice depending on their job position

Attitudes towards inclusive practice		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i>	T test	95% trust interval	
						Lower border	Upper border
Workplace	Preschool teachers	40.41	8.81	.71	-.36	-5.16	3.56
	Nurses preschool teachers	41.21	11.78				

Note: M – mean; SD – standard deviation; p – significance level;

Based on the data presented in Table 2, it can be concluded that there are no statistically significant differences in attitudes toward inclusive practice with respect to job position. An examination of the mean values of the two analyzed groups of preschool teachers indicates that preschool teachers have slightly lower average scores on the questionnaire measuring attitudes toward inclusive practice compared to nurse–preschool teachers; however, these differences are not prominent enough to be considered statistically significant.

Table 3

Results of examining differences in educators' attitudes toward inclusive practice depending on the length of their work experience with children who require support.

Attitudes towards inclusive practice		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>P</i>	T test	95% trust interval	
						Lower border	Upper border
Work experience	Up to 10 years	41.27	8.83	.33	.96	-1.81	5.25
	More than 10 years	39.55	10.25				

Note: M – mean; SD – standard deviation; p – significance level;

Based on the data presented in Table 3, it can be concluded that there are no statistically significant differences in educators' attitudes toward inclusive practice with respect to work experience. The analysis showed that educators with up to 10 years of experience working with children who require

support have slightly higher average scores on the questionnaire used to assess attitudes toward inclusive practice compared to educators with more than 10 years of such work experience.

Table 4

Results of examining differences in educators' attitudes toward inclusive practice depending on whether they have attended professional training on inclusion

Attitudes towards inclusive practice		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>P</i>	T test	95% trust interval	
						Lower border	Upper border
Attending trainings	Yes	41.83	9.15	.32	.98	-1.87	5.57
	No	39.98	9.55				

Note: M – mean; SD – standard deviation; p – significance level;

Based on the results presented in Table 4, it can be observed that attending professional development programs in the field of inclusive education over the past five years does not lead to statistically significant differences in educators' attitudes toward inclusive practice. Although the average scores are somewhat higher for educators who have recently participated in such training compared to those who have not done so for more than five years, this difference is not pronounced enough to be considered statistically significant. In other words, it can be concluded that the attitudes of educators in both examined groups are essentially uniform.

Table 5

The results of examining differences in educators' attitudes toward inclusive practice depending on the level of support needed by the child they are currently working with

Attitudes towards inclusive practice		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>P</i>	T test	95% trust interval	
						Lower border	Upper border
Level of support	High/moderate	39.54	10.04	.04	-1.89	-9.05	.22
	Low	43.95	7.59				

Note: M – mean; SD – standard deviation; p – significance level;

Based on the data presented in Table 5, it is evident that there are statistically significant differences in preschool teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practice depending on whether they are currently working with a child they perceive as requiring a low level of support, compared to those who

assess that the child they work with requires a moderate or high level of support. An examination of the mean scores between the two analyzed groups shows that teachers who perceive the child they currently work with as needing a low level of support display significantly more positive attitudes toward inclusive practice than those who perceive the child as requiring a moderate or high level of support.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate several important conclusions that can contribute to a better understanding of preschool teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practice in preschool institutions. These conclusions are limited to the studied sample. First and foremost, one of the most significant findings concerns the difference in teachers' attitudes with respect to age. Namely, younger teachers (up to 40 years of age) have statistically significantly more positive attitudes toward inclusive practice compared to their older colleagues. This result is consistent with earlier expert opinions and research showing that younger teachers—educated during a period when inclusion was already established as part of educational policy—demonstrate greater openness and flexibility in their work, as well as more positive attitudes toward inclusive practice (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Mirošević & Lozančić, 2014). Younger teachers are also often more familiar with contemporary inclusive pedagogical principles and exhibit greater confidence in applying innovative approaches.

Age brings not only biological changes but also generational differences in values, education, and social influences. Younger teachers, especially those under 40, typically belong to generations educated at a time when inclusion was already part of legal and pedagogical standards. They participated in training and courses where inclusive practices were assumed as the norm and were more frequently exposed to digital tools, innovative approaches, and international trends in education. While the analysis by age categories (up to 40 and over 40) confirmed a statistically significant difference in attitudes toward inclusive practice, no such difference was found regarding work experience (up to and over 10 years). This seemingly contradictory finding can be better understood by considering the temporal context of educational reform in Serbia, particularly the introduction of inclusive education as a legal and pedagogical requirement nearly two decades ago.

Reforms that began around 2009 (with the adoption of the *Law on the Foundations of the Education System*) significantly influenced the content of study programs and professional training for future preschool teachers. Those who obtained their formal education after the implementation of inclusion (which roughly aligns with the age threshold of 40) were already professionally formed within the inclusive paradigm, familiar with children's rights, differentiated instruction, teamwork, and support models. On the other hand, ten years of work experience is not a sufficient temporal marker to distinguish

teachers by generational-educational background. Many teachers with over ten years of experience may have completed their formal education after the reforms, while some with less experience may not have received inclusive education, depending on their individual educational paths. In this context, age functions as a better indirect indicator of educational generation than work experience because it aligns more closely with reform periods and changes in the professional education system for preschool teachers. This suggests that generational belonging (with all its value-based, pedagogical, and cultural components) is more deeply associated with attitudes toward inclusion than the length of professional engagement. The presented results indicate that it is important to invest efforts in the professional development of all preschool teachers, but especially in creating opportunities for older teachers to develop a more flexible and positive attitude toward inclusion through training, mentoring programs, and practical support. This would reduce the generational gap and enable the formation of a more cohesive professional climate in preschool institutions, one that would provide stronger support for the implementation of inclusive practices.

The results also show that there is no statistically significant difference in attitudes toward inclusive practice between preschool teachers and medical-nurse preschool teachers. Although the teachers displayed slightly lower average scores ($M = 40.41$) compared to medical-nurse preschool teachers ($M = 41.21$), this difference is not large enough to be considered statistically significant ($p = 0.71$). Thus, the hypothesis that teachers are more inclined toward inclusive practice compared to their colleagues with a medical educational background is rejected. This result may be interpreted from several perspectives. First, it should be considered that both professional groups work within the same institutional environment and face similar challenges in their daily practice. As noted by Galović, Brojčanin, and Glumbić (2014), the work environment and the professional culture of the institution can strongly influence the shaping of attitudes among all employees, regardless of formal qualifications. In this sense, continuous teamwork and institutional goals related to inclusion may contribute to the homogenization of attitudes across different professional profiles. Thus, Dimitrijević and Starčević (2024), in their study on the beliefs of professionals in the field of education in Serbia, state that the key difference in attitudes is not determined by professional profile, but rather by exposure to inclusive practices, professional development, and personal experience in practice. This result is particularly significant because it suggests that positive attitudes toward inclusion develop primarily through practice and education, rather than through initial professional orientation. A study conducted by Sucuoğlu, Bakkaloglu, Karasu, Demir, and Akalin (2013) likewise shows that, for both preschool teachers and other educational staff, such as medical-nurse preschool teachers, attitudes toward inclusion are largely linked to the degree of understanding of inclusive principles rather than to the profession itself. In this sense, the lack of a significant difference may indicate that neither group is fully equipped with the

knowledge and skills that inclusive practice requires. Given this, it appears that the formal distinction between preschool teachers and medical-nurse preschool teachers is not a sufficient basis for differentiating attitudes toward inclusion. Instead, emphasis should be placed on continuous professional development, joint training sessions, and strengthening intersectoral cooperation.

Although the literature and practice of inclusive education frequently emphasize the importance of professional development as a key factor in fostering positive attitudes and competencies for work in inclusive settings (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002), the results of this study indicate no statistically significant differences between preschool teachers who attended professional training in inclusive education in the past five years and those who did not ($p = 0.32$). While teachers who attended training had a slightly higher mean score ($M = 41.83$) compared to those who did not ($M = 39.98$), this difference was not pronounced enough to be considered significant. These findings raise several important questions. First, the quality and content of professional training need to be examined. Research shows that occasional or superficial training programs—those lacking a practical component and ongoing support—often fail to have a deep impact on changing attitudes or developing competencies among preschool teachers (Florian & Rouse, 2009). Mere quantitative attendance at training does not guarantee its effectiveness in altering attitudes, particularly if the training is not experiential and rooted in the real challenges of practice. Furthermore, certain authors highlight the existence of so-called “declarative support for inclusion,” where professionals express formally positive attitudes in theory but lack genuine readiness to implement them in daily practice (Jordan, Schwartz, & McGhie-Richmond, 2009). In this sense, even more positive attitudes do not necessarily translate into readiness for inclusive work if the training is not directly connected to everyday challenges that teachers face.

It is also noteworthy that similar results appear in the regional context. Galović et al. (2014), in a study conducted in Vojvodina, point out that positive attitudes toward inclusion most often stem from prior positive practical experience rather than from formal education or professional development alone. Therefore, it seems that direct, well-supported practice in inclusive environments has a stronger impact on professionals’ attitudes than mere participation in training programs. However, the results reported by Galović et al. are somewhat inconsistent with the findings of the research conducted for the purposes of this study. Namely, the results indicate that significantly more positive attitudes toward inclusion are found among preschool teachers who assess that the child in their group requires a low level of support, compared to those who work with a child who requires a high or moderate level of support. The results presented in Table 5 show a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.04$) in teachers’ attitudes toward inclusive practice depending on their assessment of the level of support needed by the child they are currently working with. Teachers who estimate that the child requires a low level of support hold significantly more positive attitudes toward inclusion ($M = 43.95$) compared to those who estimate that

moderate or high support is required ($M = 39.54$).

This finding opens several dimensions for interpretation. First, it should be noted that the attitudes here are not examined on the basis of previous experience, but rather on the basis of a current professional challenge—namely, the immediate work with a child with specific educational needs. Although previous literature (Galović et al., 2014) emphasizes that positive prior experiences contribute to the development of affirmative attitudes toward inclusion, our results suggest that the intensity and complexity of the current situation strongly shape professionals' attitudes. One possible explanation is that preschool teachers who work with children requiring higher levels of support face greater challenges in implementing inclusive practice, which may lead to feelings of insufficient competence, professional stress, and even frustration (Jordan et al., 2009). This can negatively influence their overall perception of inclusion—not due to ideological resistance, but because of real obstacles in daily practice, such as a lack of assistants, inadequate institutional support, or insufficient cooperation with parents and professional teams (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). In contrast, teachers who work with children requiring a lower level of support tend to have more positive everyday experiences, feel more competent, are more successful in their work, and are generally in a better position to develop and maintain affirmative attitudes toward inclusion. Their experiences may not be burdened by major systemic challenges, which makes it easier to align inclusive principles with practical work.

An additional aspect that should be considered is the perception of self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) emphasizes that the subjective sense of confidence and competence plays a key role in one's willingness to take on challenges. In this regard, preschool teachers who feel more capable of working with children who have milder difficulties likely exhibit higher levels of self-efficacy, which can positively influence their attitudes toward inclusion. The use of standardized guidelines for building high-quality relationships between preschool institutions and parents—particularly through planned forms of support—can also contribute to teachers' professional effectiveness (Petković, 2015). Given this, the results of this study are not necessarily in contradiction with previous findings but rather complement them by highlighting the complexity of the dynamic relationship between the type of experience, the severity of the case, and teachers' attitudes. Positive prior experiences may have a long-term influence, while the intensity of current challenges exerts a stronger short-term emotional and professional effect.

The findings of this research point to several important directions for pedagogical practice, i.e., pedagogical implications and the further development of inclusive education. First, the results confirm that teachers' attitudes and beliefs are among the key factors in the successful implementation of inclusion in preschool settings. Systematic monitoring and analysis of these attitudes allow a better understanding of obstacles and resources in practice and provide the basis for creating targeted and sustainable support programs. In practical terms, the results indicate the need for continuous professional

development for preschool teachers. Such programs should include various professional profiles—both those employed as preschool teachers and those working in roles categorized as medical-nurse preschool teachers. In this way, it becomes possible to identify specific challenges and adapt training content to the actual working conditions. Of particular importance is the inclusion of male preschool teachers, who are underrepresented in both practice and research, and whose experiences and perspectives may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the needs and potentials of inclusive education.

The theoretical contribution of this research lies in further clarifying the relationship between preschool teachers' professional characteristics and their attitudes toward inclusion. The results confirm that these attitudes are not homogeneous, but are shaped by generational differences, the work context, and educational experiences. In doing so, the study expands the existing body of knowledge in the field of inclusive education and highlights the need for new analytical frameworks that do not focus solely on formal variables (such as job position or length of service), but also on the qualitative aspects of professional development, including the availability of mentoring support, supervision, and opportunities for teamwork. For future research, it is recommended to expand the sample to include preschool teachers from different geographical regions and various types of institutions (public and private), to ensure the representativeness of the results. It would also be beneficial to conduct longitudinal monitoring of the same participants over time, as this would allow for an examination of how continuous professional development, changes in the legislative framework, and institutional support influence the dynamics of attitudes. In conclusion, the inclusive education cannot be understood merely as a legal requirement, but rather as a complex and dynamic process that demands ongoing reflection, professional development, and practitioner empowerment. In this way, inclusion in preschool settings can evolve into an authentic and sustainable practice that responds to the needs of every child and contributes to the development of the wider community.

Conclusion

The research provided insight into the complexity and multilayered nature of the factors that shape preschool teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practice in early childhood education settings. The analysis revealed statistically significant differences in attitudes toward inclusion with respect to the participants' age and the level of support required by the child they currently work with. However, no significant differences were found in relation to job position, years of professional experience, or participation in professional development in the field of inclusion. The most important finding is that younger teachers (up to 40 years of age) express more positive attitudes toward inclusion, which can be linked to generational differences in training and the stronger presence of inclusive principles in more recent educational programs. Additionally, teachers who work with children requiring a lower level of

support demonstrate more positive attitudes than those who deal daily with more complex cases. This result highlights the importance of the professional context, suggesting that practical challenges may shape attitudes even more strongly than theoretical training.

In line with the philosophy of inclusive education, which emphasizes that inclusion benefits all children, it is essential to understand the reasons behind differences in its implementation. The attitudes of preschool teachers, as the direct implementers of inclusive practice, serve as key indicators of both systemic barriers and opportunities. Understanding their experiences, challenges, and perceptions is not merely an academic concern—it is a practical foundation for developing more effective educational policies and interventions. Although teachers' beliefs about inclusion have been widely researched, the experiential and value-based perspectives of early childhood educators (especially in urban contexts) remain insufficiently explored, making this study a valuable contribution to the field.

The research has several limitations. Firstly, the sample is relatively small and homogeneous, as all participants were women employed in the same institution, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Secondly, reliance on self-report questionnaires may have led to biased responses due to socially desirable answering. Finally, the operationalization of professional training was insufficiently detailed; factors such as the content, duration, and methodology of professional development programs were not examined, which could explain the absence of their measurable effects. Although quantitative approaches are useful for identifying general patterns, they cannot fully capture the subjective and emotional aspects of working with children who require additional support. Therefore, future research should incorporate qualitative methods—such as semi-structured interviews, focus groups, or case studies—to provide deeper insight into the professional dilemmas, emotional challenges, and barriers experienced in everyday practice, which remain invisible in standardized questionnaires.

One of the key recommendations concerns the need for a more detailed evaluation of professional development programs related to inclusive education. Future studies should examine not only participation in such programs but also their content, methodological approach, duration, and whether they include elements such as mentoring, supervision, and reflective practice. Only through a systematic and comprehensive analysis of various forms of professional development will it be possible to identify which programs truly contribute to changes in teachers' attitudes and the strengthening of their competencies for inclusive practice. Ultimately, understanding teachers' attitudes should not be seen as an endpoint, but as the beginning of a deeper dialogue on the quality of inclusive practice in early childhood education. When these attitudes are interpreted within the broader context of systemic conditions, organizational support, and opportunities for professional growth, it becomes possible to shape inclusion that is not merely declarative but genuinely functional and sustainable. Inclusion is not

only a legal obligation—it is a daily practice carried out by those who work with children. For inclusion to be successful, it is essential to understand, support, and empower them.

PREGLED STAVOVA VASPITAČA O INKLUZIVNOJ PRAKSI

Rezime

Ovaj rad pruža sveobuhvatan uvid u stavove vaspitača prema inkluzivnoj praksi u predškolskim ustanovama, uz naglasak na analizu načina na koje različite socio-demografske i profesionalne karakteristike utiču na formiranje tih stavova. Inkluzija, kao savremeni koncept u obrazovnom sistemu, podrazumeva obezbeđivanje jednakih mogućnosti za svu decu, nezavisno od njihovih razvojnih, socijalnih ili kulturnih razlika. Uprkos tome što je koncept inkluzije već više od decenije formalno integrisan u srpski sistem obrazovanja, njegovo sprovođenje u praksi i dalje je praćeno brojnim izazovima. Stoga je razumevanje stavova vaspitača ključno za unapređenje kvaliteta i održivosti inkluzivne prakse, jer upravo ti stavovi predstavljaju osnovu na kojoj se zasnivaju profesionalna ponašanja i svakodnevne pedagoške odluke.

Uzorak u istraživanju činilo je 116 vaspitačica iz Predškolske ustanove „Radosno detinjstvo“ u Novom Sadu, što predstavlja relevantnu grupu za analizu stavova u urbanom, sistemski uređenom okruženju. Primena Multidimenzionalne skale stavova prema inkluzivnom obrazovanju (MATIES) omogućila je detaljnu analizu kognitivnih i bihevioralnih komponenti stavova, dok su socio-demografski podaci pružili uvid u razlike u okviru starosti, radnog staža, radnog mesta, prethodnog stručnog usavršavanja i procene nivoa podrške koju zahteva dete sa kojim vaspitač trenutno radi.

Najznačajniji nalaz odnosi se na razliku u stavovima između mlađih i starijih vaspitača. Rezultati pokazuju da vaspitači mlađi od 40 godina ispoljavaju značajno pozitivnije stavove prema inkluziji u odnosu na koleginice starije od 40 godina. Ovakav generacijski jaz može se objasniti procesom profesionalne socijalizacije i promenama u obrazovnom sistemu Srbije. Vaspitači koji su školovani tokom poslednjih petnaestak godina, od implementacije inkluzije 2009. godine, imali su više prilike da tokom studija i obuka razvijaju kompetencije u radu sa decom sa različitim razvojnim potrebama. Time su pristupi poput diferencirane nastave, timskog rada, individualizacije i emocionalne podrške postali integrisani elementi njihovog profesionalnog identiteta. Nasuprot tome, starije generacije vaspitača često nisu imale sistemski uređene modele pripreme, pa inkluziju percipiraju kao dodatni profesionalni izazov, što se može odraziti na njihove stavove.

Suprotno početnim očekivanjima, istraživanje nije utvrdilo statistički značajne razlike u stavovima prema inkluziji u odnosu na ukupne godine radnog staža. Ovaj nalaz pokazuje da radno iskustvo samo po sebi nije odlučujući činioc formiranja pozitivnog ili negativnog stava. Jedno moguće

objašnjenje odnosi se na preplitanje radnog iskustva i generacijskih karakteristika: vaspitač sa deset godina staža može pripadati istoj generaciji kao i koleginica sa četiri godine staža, pa radni staž ne predstavlja dovoljno precizan indikator profesionalnih uverenja. Drugim rečima, formalno vreme provedeno u radu nije jednako relevantno kao period kada je profesionalna socijalizacija započeta.

Takođe, nije utvrđena značajna razlika u stavovima između dve profesionalne kategorije: vaspitača i medicinskih sestara–vaspitača. Ovo je važan nalaz jer ukazuje da profesionalna orijentacija nije ključni prediktor pozitivnog odnosa prema inkluziji. I vaspitači i medicinske sestre dele zajedničko profesionalno okruženje, strukturu rada i svakodnevne izazove, što može homogenizovati njihove stavove. Ovaj rezultat takođe podržava ideju da se stavovi pre oblikuju iskustvima i institucionalnom klimom nego inicijalnim obrazovanjem.

Zanimljivo je da ni pohađanje stručnih obuka o inkluziji tokom prethodnih pet godina nije rezultiralo značajnim razlikama u stavovima. Iako su ispitanici koji su pohađali obuke imali nešto više prosečne skorove, razlika nije bila statistički značajna. Ovaj nalaz otvara važno pitanje o kvalitetu stručnih usavršavanja. Ako su obuke previše teorijske, kratkotrajne, nedovoljno primenljive ili bez praktičnih primera, njihova efektivnost u promeni stavova može biti ograničena. U literaturi se naglašava da samo kontinuirane, refleksivne i praktično zasnovane obuke dovode do stvarnih promena u profesionalnim uverenjima. Povremeni seminari, naročito oni sa frontalnim metodama rada, uglavnom nemaju takav efekat.

Najznačajniji nalaz u drugom delu istraživanja odnosi se na procenu nivoa podrške koju dete sa kojim vaspitač trenutno radi zahteva. Ispitanici koji rade sa detetom za koje procenjuju da mu je potreban nizak nivo podrške imaju statistički znatno pozitivnije stavove o inkluziji od onih koji rade sa decom čije potrebe klasifikuju kao umerene ili visoke. Ovaj rezultat pruža važan psihološki i praktični uvid u dinamiku inkluzivne prakse. Rad sa detetom čije su potrebe kompleksnije, intenzivnije i zahtevaju dodatne resurse, često je praćen većim profesionalnim stresom, osećajem nedovoljne kompetentnosti, frustracijama nastalim zbog nedostatka sistemske podrške ili ograničenim resursima u ustanovi. Vaspitači koji svakodnevno rade u takvim uslovima mogu razviti ambivalentniji stav prema inkluziji, ne zato što ne prihvataju inkluzivne vrednosti, već zato što se suočavaju sa objektivnim teškoćama koje otežavaju njihovu primenu. Nasuprot tome, vaspitači koji rade sa decom kojima je potrebna manja podrška češće doživljavaju pozitivne profesionalne ishode, lakše postignute ciljeve i prijatnije interakcije, što sve doprinosi pozitivnijem stavu prema inkluziji.

Rezultati istraživanja ukazuju na nekoliko važnih implikacija za praksu. Najpre, neophodno je dalje osnaživanje vaspitača kroz sistemske podršku, nadzor, mentorstvo i stalne oblike praktično orijentisanog profesionalnog usavršavanja. Posebnu pažnju potrebno je posvetiti vaspitačima koji rade sa decom kojoj je potrebna veća i intenzivnija podrška, jer su oni najizloženiji profesionalnom stresu i

riziku od razvoja negativnijih stavova. Takođe, rezultati ukazuju na potrebu unapređenja kvaliteta profesionalnih obuka, koje bi trebalo da budu učestale, refleksivne, zasnovane na realnim situacijama iz prakse i podržane kontinuiranim savetovanjem i supervizijom. Zaključno, istraživanje pokazuje da su stavovi vaspitača prema inkluzivnoj praksi višeslojni i uslovljeni kombinacijom ličnih, generacijskih i profesionalnih faktora. Razumevanje ovih faktora predstavlja osnovu za dalje unapređenje inkluzivnog obrazovanja, jer samo vaspitač koji oseća podršku, kompetentnost i profesionalnu sigurnost može efikasno da realizuje inkluzivne principe u radu sa decom.

Ključne reči: inkluzivno obrazovanje; vaspitači; stavovi; predškolska ustanova; sociodemografske karakteristike.

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