



Preschool Teachers' Views on the Outcomes of Preschool Inclusive Education for Students with Special Educational Needs and Typically Developing Students

Nektaria Megapanou

National Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens, Greece

Email: nmegapanou@gmail.gr

How to cite this paper: Megapanou, N. (2022) Preschool Teachers' Views on the Outcomes of Preschool Inclusive Education for Students with Special Educational Needs and Typically Developing Students. *Open Access Library Journal*, 9: e8472. <https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1108472>

Received: February 10, 2022

Accepted: March 8, 2022

Published: March 11, 2022

Copyright © 2022 by author(s) and Open Access Library Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the views of preschool general education teachers regarding the social, learning, and developmental benefits of inclusive education for both typically developing students and students with special educational needs. The present research was carried out through the conduct of the quantitative method and the use of the standard questionnaire. The research involved 60 teachers from 8 different structures of pre-school general education in the prefectures of Attica, Ioannina, Fokida, Heraklion, Lesvos, and Thessaloniki. The research questions were about the benefits of inclusive education for students with special educational needs, the consequences of inclusive education for students with special educational needs, the benefits of inclusive education for typically developing preschool students and the consequences of inclusive education for preschool students with special needs. According to the research results, all students studying in mixed educational settings seem to benefit in all the areas examined.

Subject Areas

Special Education

Keywords

Inclusion, Inclusive Education, Preschool Education, Integration

1. Introduction

One of the most controversial and important issues in the field of pedagogical

sciences is the educational treatment of students with special educational needs [1]. However, it is a common belief that these students have the right to unhindered access to the educational process, so that they have equal learning opportunities with all students [2] [3]. The structure of the school environment should allow the equal participation of all students, as well as the utilization of special abilities that characterize the growth rate of each student [4]. In this context, in recent years, special emphasis has been placed on the inclusive education of students with special educational needs, at international and national level [5] [6] [7] [8] [9]. The definition refers to the education of students with special educational needs in a general educational context, in order to provide equal learning opportunities and participation of individuals in the learning process, as well as their equal treatment in all areas of social life [7]. According to the international literature [10] [11] [12] [13], the integration of students with special educational needs in general educational environments during preschool age, brings positive results in their developmental and learning process, as well as in their participation in other general contexts.

The purpose of this research is to explore the views of preschool teachers who are active in general educational contexts, on the contribution of preschool inclusive education to the social, cognitive, and learning development of students with special educational needs and typically developing students.

Considering the purpose of this research proposal, as well as the already existing research data, the following research questions were created:

- 1) What are the benefits of inclusive education for students with special educational needs?
- 2) What are the consequences of inclusive education for students with special educational needs?
- 3) What are the benefits of inclusive education for typically developing preschoolers?
- 4) What are the consequences of inclusive education for typically developing preschool students?

2. Theoretical Framework

One of the most accepted models in the international arena for the education of students with special educational needs, against the stigma, exclusion and marginalization reproduced by the structures of special education and training, is inclusive education [14] [15]. According to Loreman [16], this term refers to the defense of the right of every child to attend the school in his or her neighborhood. In this context, the school units and the relevant directorates of education are called to enroll and educate every child living in the area, while at the same time they must treat all students as equal members of the school and the wider community, regardless of their particular characteristics. The term inclusive education means the process by which all students with or without special needs attend general education schools, follow similar curricula, while using a variety

of teaching methods that meet the needs and particularities of each student. The implementation of inclusive education in order to be effective, requires the support of all students for participation in the learning process and the possibility of socializing, as well as teachers to have the appropriate knowledge and to be able to apply it in practice in the context of inclusive education [16].

Barton & Smith [17], approaching the concept of inclusion socio-politically, argue that inclusive education “deals with the causes, time, place and potential outcomes of education of all students independently. In other words, it concerns the provision of education to the entire student population”. Aiming at the well-being of all students, the school unit should accept diversity and respond to the special educational needs of the entire student population [17]. Therefore, inclusive education is not about the process of adapting a group of children and assimilating them from a rigid learning environment. On the contrary, it is a “two-way process” in which the special characteristics of each student are constantly maintained, enriched and constantly evolving, being not an obstacle but an occasion for approaching the learning process in a different way [7].

During inclusive education, the categorizations of students into groups of disorders are removed, while at the same time their socialization is enhanced. With the policy of inclusive education, diversity is accepted, thus creating an educational system that addresses all students with respect [18] [19]. Also, the teaching methods used seem to enhance the active participation of students with special educational needs in the learning process, promoting the learning, emotional and social development of students [20].

To achieve the goals of inclusive education, the process of its implementation should start from pre-school education [21]. According to the American Division of Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) [22], preschool inclusive education is the right of every preschool child with or without special educational needs to participate actively in group activities in the classroom, to develop social skills and friendships with other children and to develop both cognitive and learning skills. Numerous studies have highlighted the contribution of preschool integration of students with special educational needs to their cognitive and learning development.

Odom *et al.* [23] conducted research on preschool inclusive education in schools in the United States. The study involved children aged 2 to 5 years who attended inclusive education. Using the mixed method, in conjunction with the observation, they found that students in inclusive classrooms were more likely to interact with their peers than students attending separate educational contexts. At the same time, significant positive results were observed in the developmental and behavioral development of students. Students of typical development appeared to develop empathy skills and acceptance of diversity. Similar were the results of research by Kwon, Elicker, & Kontos [24], which aimed to investigate the role of teachers’ verbal motivation in the development of social relationships in children with special educational needs of preschool students attending gen-

eral educational contexts, as opposed to children attending special education contexts. The research involved 23 boys and 7 girls with special educational needs, aged 39 to 78 months, and their teachers. Seven of the students were observed in the context of providing individualized teaching in the University laboratories, 13 of them were observed in a public special education structure and 10 of them in a public school which applies the practice of inclusive education.

Research on pre-school inclusive education and its benefits has also been conducted by Rafferty, Piscitelli & Boetcher [25]. Their purpose was to compare the degree of development of social and language skills of children with special educational needs who attend classes without exclusions, compared to students who study in special structures. The study involved 96 children, 71% of whom were boys with special educational needs. The age of the participants ranged from 33 to 57 months. For the collection of information, questionnaires were completed by the parents of the children. Also weighted assessment tools related to social and language skills of the students who attended special educational units were used. In the early stages of data collection process, participating students were assessed on language and social skills. They were then transferred to contexts where inclusive teaching methods were applied. In the final stages of the research, the students were re-evaluated. According to the results, there was an improvement in the areas of social skills, oral expression, and comprehension of verbal commands, but not in the manifestation of unwanted behaviors. In addition, the researchers noted that social isolation rates appear to be declining for students in general educational contexts, while opportunities for the development of social, language, and academic skills were provided.

Phillips and Meloy [26] conducted research on the cognitive and learning development of children with special educational needs attending general classes. The study involved 3048 preschool students, of whom 312 with special educational needs. Weighted evaluation tools were used to collect the research data. According to the results of the research, both children with special educational needs and typically developing children who attended high-quality pre-school integration programs in general kindergarten, achieved significant benefits in early literacy skills, while the results were opposite for early mathematical skills. Similar were the results of Green *et al.* [27], who studied the progress in the emerging literacy skills of children with special educational needs in classes where the principles of inclusive education are applied, over a period of two academic years. The study involved 77 preschool students with special educational needs, of whom 37% were girls, and 77 typically developing peers in the same class. The researchers noted a positive effect on the development of language and literacy skills in children with special educational needs attending general integration classes. Furthermore, children with special educational needs have made significant progress in raising awareness of printed language and spoken language in relation to their typically developing peers. However, the gap between the two groups of students widened for phonological awareness skills.

Finally, the research of Nahmias *et al.* [28] examined the effect of inclusion in

general pre-school education in relation to other practices in children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). The study involved 98 preschool children on the autism spectrum. Data collection was done through the evaluation of children with weighted evaluation tools. The researchers observed the enhancement of cognitive skills and their development during the entry of children into primary education in relation to students who attended exclusively Special Education programs. At the same time, a pattern emerged that suggests the special importance of placing students in inclusive educational contexts with severe social deficits, greater difficulties in adapting behaviors, and at least a basic level of language skills. The results of the research provide preliminary information on important characteristics of the child that should be considered when parents and providers make decisions about the placement of early preschool intervention.

According to research by Warren, Martinez & Sortino [29], pre-school inclusive education significantly benefits both students with special educational needs and typically developing students. The researchers, using the mixed method, examined the academic and social development of students with special educational needs and typically developing students. In the research process 46 students participated. The results of Coelho, Cadima & Pinto [30], who researched the quality and effectiveness of activities in 39 preschool inclusive education settings, seem to be similar. The process involved 184 preschool students studying in inclusive learning environments.

Barton & Smith [17] conducted research in the United States on parental views on inclusive preschool education. They identified concerns about the effectiveness of inclusive education, as a significant proportion of respondents argued that either students with special educational needs would receive lower-level services than required, or that typically developing students would be overlooked by teachers.

As can be seen from the literature review, research in the international arena has focused on the importance, significance, and contribution of preschool inclusion of students with special educational needs in general educational contexts, both in cognitive and learning development, and in social interaction. Furthermore, research focuses on the contribution of this educational model to the emotional and social development of typically developing students. However, research activity seems to be incomplete in terms of exploring the views of preschool teachers, who are active in the general educational context, on the contribution of preschool integration, both to students with special educational needs and to typically developing students.

Regarding Greece, no research has been conducted related to the pre-school inclusion of students with special educational needs. In Greece, the importance of pre-school inclusive education began to be recognized and occupied by the government at the beginning of the 21st century. In this context, laws were issued regarding the support of the individual needs of students with special educational needs and the promotion of integration policy in general learning envi-

ronments. More specifically, with Law N.2817/2000 [31] and the Ministerial Decision Π1/Γ.Π.οικ.116847/2002 [32], the right of preschool children with special educational needs to attend general education kindergarten classes up to the age of 7 years was guaranteed by law for the first time. In addition, the state with Law N.3699/2008 [33] supported the concepts of access and active participation of students with special educational needs both in the educational process and in social life of the general school. Continuing its efforts to strengthen the pre-school integration of students with special needs in the general school context, the Ministry of Education has built a new Curriculum [34]. Emphasis was placed on the process of differentiation of both the curriculum and teaching methods, strategies, pedagogical tools, and the differentiation of activities, to meet the specific needs of each student. Despite the government's efforts to promote and strengthen inclusive education policy, the educational models applied are governed by the logic of student segregation. Providing education to students with special educational needs in separate integration departments of general school and not in the same classroom, is the dominant model of educational support [7] [34]. This intensifies stereotypes, comparisons, and segregation practices between children with and without special educational needs [35], while promoting the stigmatization and marginalization of these students.

3. Research Methodology

The present research was carried out through the conduct of the quantitative method. When conducting quantitative research, the aim is to measure general theoretical concepts, through tools such as the standard questionnaire. The form of quantitative research is stable and definite, a factor that gives objectivity to the extraction of results. At the same time, theoretical hypotheses can be validated using a large sample, which is considered representative of the population [36]. The purpose of conducting the quantitative research is to find general trends in the population and consequently to verify the research questions [37]. Through the quantitative research method, the researcher can fully delineate both the independent and the dependent variables. At the same time, it is possible to strictly control the cases and extract objective results, thus achieving the reliability of the data collected.

The standard questionnaire was used to complete the present research to extract the research results. The choice of this research tool was made, as its structured form makes it easy to use both in administration and analysis [37]. More specifically, the process of completing the questionnaire by the participants in the research is time consuming, while the presence of the researcher is not required. At the same time, with the issuance of the questionnaire, anonymity is provided to the participants and consequently the possibility of objective answers. This ensures the validity and reliability of the results [37]. According to Cohen *et al.* [33], a research tool is considered valid when it measures and evaluates the variable to be examined, while the reliability of the questionnaire is related to the performance of similar, consistent results in each measurement

that will follow. The Wright [35] and Rafferty & Griffin [36] questionnaires were selected to cover the research questions of the present study. The questions of the two questionnaires were adapted to the needs of the research, while for their translation the techniques of forward translation and back word translation were used. Conceptual equivalence as well as semantic equivalence was maintained during the translation process. According to Hall, Zaragoza, Hamdache, Manchaiah, Thammaiah & Evans [37], conceptual equivalence refers to rendering of concepts from English (questionnaire language) to Greek (translation language), while semantic equivalence refers to the conservation of the sentences' meaning in the translation process. Demographic data were added to the questionnaire, which serve to conduct results related to research questions. Demographics were used for research purposes only and were not disclosed to the public without the consent of the beneficiaries.

Closed and open type multiple choice questions, and Likert scale questions were used to construct the questionnaire of the present survey. This seeks the easy and fast completion of the questionnaire by the participants, as well as the coding of the results and the observation of the trends of the sample by the researcher. Continuing, the questionnaire consists of 9 questions, which are divided into two parts. Questions 1 - 5 compose the first part of the questionnaire. They are demographic in nature and take the form of multiple choices. The second part consists of questions 6-9. Question 6 is closed type, while questions 7 and 8 are open type. Question 9 consists of 35 sub-questions, which are part of the Likert scale.

Finally, before issuing the questionnaires to the research participants, a pilot survey was conducted on a small number of participants (5 people), in order to assess the validity and reliability of the research tool and to make the necessary corrections. At the end of the pilot survey, the questionnaire was distributed to the participants [38]. The collected data were analyzed based on the statistical tool SPSS [39].

All personal data collected from the questionnaires were used exclusively for the conduct of the survey and were not disclosed to third parties without the prior consent of the participant.

4. Results

The sample of participants in the research process, after the data analysis, was as follows: 81.7% of participants are women. The participants are mainly holders of undergraduate degrees (68.3%), while a significant percentage holds a postgraduate degree. At the same time, a large percentage of participants (75%) stated up to 10 years work experience, while the percentages of participants with work experience over 11 years were lower. Continuing, 60% of the sample consists of teachers up to 30 years old, 31.7% of teachers 31 to 40 years old, while the remaining 8.3% of teachers over 41 years old. 75% of the participants have work experience from 1 to 10 years, 20% from 11 to 20 years, while only 3% of the sample has work experience that exceeds 20 years of work.

Regarding the attendance of students with special educational needs in general educational contexts, only 45% of the participants stated that students with special educational needs attend classes in mixed classes. Of the total number of students, 14 have been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, 3 with Specific Learning Disabilities, 6 with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, 2 with Mental Retardation and 2 with Down Syndrome. The ages of the students range from 2 to 5 years.

The research hypothesis that students with special educational need benefit from their inclusion in inclusive educational contexts, seems to be mostly confirmed. As shown in **Table 1**, teachers' views are as follows: 65% of teachers believe that students with educational needs can benefit from their attendance in the general classroom, while 16.7% disagree. The remaining 18.3% hold a neutral stance on the outcomes of inclusive education for students with special educational needs [40], according to which teachers express positive attitudes towards inclusive education. On the contrary are the results of a similar survey conducted in Finland [41]. The research examined the attitudes of teachers regarding the inclusive education and co-education of typically developing students and students with special educational needs. The research involved 1764 teachers, of which 824 general education teachers, 575 specialty teachers and 365 special educators. For the evaluation of teachers' attitudes 3 different measurement scales were used. According to the survey results, 20.6% of the general class teachers showed a negative attitude towards the results of inclusive education to students with special educational needs, while only 6.3% seemed to have a positive attitude towards inclusion. The rest remained neutral.

Continuing, according to the views of teachers, the results of inclusive education for students with special educational needs seem to be positive. More specifically, 80% of teachers believe that inclusive education promotes the acceptance of students with special educational needs by the wider school community (**Table 2**). At the same time, 45% of them claim that the chances of rejection of these students by their typically developing classmates decrease. 35% disagree, while 20% of them hold a neutral stance (**Table 3**). Regarding the acceptance of these students by the general education teachers of the school unit, 56.7% seem to believe that the chances of rejection are reduced, while only 26.7% agree. The

Table 1. A pre-school student with special educational needs can benefit from attending general class.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	14	23.3	23.3	23.3
Agree	25	41.7	41.7	65.0
I am not sure	11	18.3	18.3	83.3
Disagree	10	16.7	16.7	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 2. The attendance of preschool students with special educational needs in general classes promotes the acceptance of these children by the wider community.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	27	45.0	45.0	45.0
Agree	21	35.0	35.0	80.0
I am not sure	6	10.0	10.0	90.0
Disagree	6	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 3. Attending pre-school students with special educational needs in general classes increases the chances of these students being rejected by their typically developing classmates.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	2	3.3	3.3	3.3
Agree	19	31.7	31.7	35.0
I am not sure	12	20.0	20.0	55.0
Disagree	16	26.7	26.7	81.7
Strongly disagree	11	18.3	18.3	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

remaining percentage maintains a neutral view (**Table 4**). The above results seem to confirm the belief of Slee (2011) [15], according to whom during inclusive education, the categorizations of students in groups of disorders are removed. With the policy of inclusive education, diversity is accepted, thus creating an education system that addresses all students with respect (Booth & Ainscow 2002 [18], Barnes & Mercer, 2004 [19]).

The attitude of pre-school teachers towards the contribution of inclusive education to the preparation of students with special educational needs for the effective treatment of real life seems to be positive, as 68.3% of teachers seem to agree with this formulation, while only 15% disagree (**Table 5**). In this context, 70% of the participants believe that these students gain a greater level of independence and develop self-care skills during their studies in general contexts, while 55% believe that students with special educational needs learn through the observation of typically developing students (**Table 6**). At the same time, 76.7% of teachers argue that preschool students with special educational needs can benefit socially from attending general class, while 71% of teachers agree that the chances and opportunities for these students to participate in activities increase (**Table 7**). The above results seem to be in line with the research of Warren, Martinez & Sortino (2016) [29], according to which students with special educational needs benefit socially from their study in inclusive educational contexts. Similarly, Rafferty, Piscitelli & Boetcher (2003) [25] observed the development of

Table 4. The attendance of preschool students with special educational needs in general classes increases the chances of rejection of these students by teachers.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	16	26.7	26.7	26.7
I am not sure	10	16.7	16.7	43.3
Disagree	19	31.7	31.7	75.0
Strongly disagree	15	25.0	25.0	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 5. The attendance of preschool students with special educational needs in general classes prepares these students for the effective treatment of the real world.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	16	26.7	26.7	26.7
Agree	25	41.7	41.7	68.3
I am not sure	10	16.7	16.7	85.0
Disagree	7	11.7	11.7	96.7
Strongly disagree	2	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 6. The attendance of preschool students with special educational needs in general classes promotes the independence and the development of self-service skills of these students.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	24	40.0	40.0	40.0
Agree	18	30.0	30.0	70.0
I am not sure	8	13.3	13.3	83.3
Disagree	9	15.0	15.0	98.3
Strongly disagree	1	1.7	1.7	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 7. The attendance of preschool students with special educational needs in general classes provides these students with more opportunities to participate in activities.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	22	36.7	36.7	36.7
Agree	21	35.0	35.0	71.7
I am not sure	7	11.7	11.7	83.3
Disagree	9	15.0	15.0	98.3
Strongly disagree	1	1.7	1.7	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

social skills, verbal expression, and comprehension of verbal commands in students in inclusive educational settings as opposed to those in special education settings.

Despite the plethora of positive results that emerge during inclusive education, difficulties also seem to arise. According to data analysis, 53% of teachers claim that the provision of special assistance and personalized instructions by general education teachers to students with special educational needs is not possible in the general classroom. 30% disagree with the above wording. 41.7% believe that the provision of special therapies such as occupational therapy and speech therapy are not affected by the attendance of students in general educational contexts. 30% disagree, while 28.3% hold a neutral stance (**Table 8**). Finally, 71% agree that the attendance of preschool students with special educational needs in general classrooms may be interrupted due to the lack of teacher training (**Table 9**). In the United States of America, a significant proportion of on parents' views on inclusive preschool education argued that either students with special educational needs would receive lower education services [17] required, or typically developing students will be overlooked by teachers.

Continuing, as the data analysis shows, according to the teachers, the benefits of studying in inclusive educational contexts seem to be positive for typically developing students as well. 76.7% of teachers are against the view that the

Table 8. The attendance of preschool students with special educational needs in general classes does not allow the provision of sufficient special assistance and individualized instructions by teachers.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	5	8.3	8.3	8.3
Agree	27	45.0	45.0	53.3
I am not sure	10	16.7	16.7	70.0
Disagree	14	23.3	23.3	93.3
Strongly disagree	4	6.7	6.7	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 9. The attendance of preschool students with special educational needs in general classes can be interrupted due to the lack of teacher training.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	12	20.0	20.0	20.0
Agree	31	51.7	51.7	71.7
I am not sure	9	15.0	15.0	86.7
Disagree	6	10.0	10.0	96.7
Strongly disagree	2	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

attendance of preschool students with special educational needs in the general classroom, interrupts the education of typically developing students, while only 11.7% agree (**Table 10**). Similar are the results of teachers' views on the above perception for specific groups of disorders: physical disabilities, specific learning difficulties, behavioral disorders, sensory deficits, mild, moderate, or severe mental retardation, neurodevelopmental disorders [29]. On the contrary, students of formal development can both benefit and be harmed by inclusive education [42].

As for the results of inclusive education for typically developing students, they seem to be positive, confirming the research hypothesis. According to the analysis of research data, the largest percentage of teachers believe that typically developing students benefit academically (53% agree, while 23.3% disagree) and socially (73.3%) from the attendance of students with special education needs in the general class (**Table 11** and **Table 12**). At the same time, 55% disagree with the statement that the learning rate of typically developing preschool students will slow down if students with special educational needs also attend the general class. However, according to Vlachou & Zoniou-Sideris (2006) [42], typically developing students benefit socially from inclusive education, but not academically and cognitively. Continuing, according to the views of the interviewed pre-school teachers, the typically developing students develop empathy skills (68.3%), while at the same time learning to accept diversity (76.7%). According

Table 10. The attendance of preschool students with special educational needs in the general classroom, interferes with the education of typically developing students.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	1	1.7	1.7	1.7
Agree	6	10.0	10.0	11.7
I am not sure	7	11.7	11.7	23.3
Disagree	33	55.0	55.0	78.3
Strongly disagree	13	21.7	21.7	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 11. Typically developing students can benefit academically from enrolling students with special educational needs in the general classroom.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	6	10.0	10.0	10.0
Agree	27	45.0	45.0	55.0
I am not sure	13	21.7	21.7	76.7
Disagree	14	23.3	23.3	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 12. Typically developing students can benefit socially from attending students with special educational needs in the general classroom.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	15	25.0	25.0	25.0
Agree	29	48.3	48.3	73.3
I am not sure	7	11.7	11.7	85.0
Disagree	9	15.0	15.0	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

to Slee (2011) [15], during inclusive education, the categorizations of students into groups of disorders are removed, while at the same time their socialization is enhanced. With the policy of inclusive education, diversity is accepted, thus creating an education system that addresses all students with respect (Booth & Ainscow 2002 [18], Barnes & Mercer, 2004 [19]).

Continuing, the analysis of the data shows that 70% of teachers argue that the attendance of preschool students with special educational needs in the general classroom, does not interfere with the care provided to typically developing students. The results of teachers' views on the above perception for specific groups of disorders are similar. At the same time, 68.3% of teachers disagree with the view that typically developing preschool students will receive less attention than teachers if students with special educational needs also attend the general classroom. However, Barton & Smith (2015) [17] in their research on parents' views on the results of inclusive education identified concerns about the effectiveness of inclusive education, as a significant percentage of respondents argued that either students with special educational needs will accept lower-level services than required, or typically developing students will be overlooked by teachers.

Finally, a significant percentage of teachers (51.7%) argue that typically developing preschoolers are likely to be frightened by the unusual behaviors of their classmates with special educational needs. At the same time, according to the teachers, it seems that the typically developing preschool students are likely to be injured by their classmates with special educational needs (61.7%), while their behaviors do not seem to be affected by the manifestations of unwanted behavior of their classmates with special educational needs (66.7%).

5. Conclusions

This research paper examined the views of pre-school teachers on the benefits and outcomes of pre-school inclusive education for both students with special educational needs and typically developing students. The research involved teachers active in pre-school general education structures. Research hypotheses related to the benefits of inclusive education for students with special educational needs and typically developing students respectively, were confirmed by the research results. The views of the teachers who participated in the research

process summarize the belief that both categories of students can benefit positively from their attendance in inclusive educational contexts.

The research results partially confirmed the research hypotheses about the views of teachers, regarding the results of inclusive education for students with special educational needs and students of formal development. For students with special educational needs when attending inclusive educational settings, their acceptance by the wider school community increases, the chances of rejection by their typically developing classmates and teachers decrease, students prepare, gain greater independence, and develop self-care skills, benefit socially, and chances and opportunities to participate in activities increase. However, many teachers believe that inclusion can also have negative effects on students with special educational needs: The provision of special assistance and personalized instructions by general education teachers to students with special educational needs is not possible in the general classroom, the provision of special therapies such as occupational therapy and speech therapy is affected by students' attendance in general educational contexts, while pre-school students with special educational needs in general classrooms may be interrupted due to lack of teacher training.

Teachers' views on the results of inclusive education in typically developing students seem to partially confirm the research hypothesis that, they are positive. As the analysis of the research data showed, the typically developing students benefit academically and socially from the students with special educational needs in the general classroom, while the learning rate of the typically developing preschool students does not slow down. Till, typically developing students develop empathy skills, learn to accept diversity, care for typically developing students is not interrupted, and they will receive no less attention from teachers if there are general education students with special needs. Finally, typically developing preschoolers are more likely to be frightened by the unusual behaviors of their classmates with special educational needs, more likely to be injured by their classmates with special educational needs, while their behaviors do not seem to be affected by the manifestations of unwanted behaviors of their classmates with special educational needs.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

References

- [1] Lupart, J. (2002) Meeting the Educational Needs of Exceptional Learners in Alberta. *Exceptionality Education Canada*, **11**, 55-70.
- [2] Fisher, A.C. (2007) Creating a Discourse of Difference. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, **2**, 159-192. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1746197907077049>
- [3] Onaga, E.E. and Martoccio, T.L. (2008) Dynamic and Uncertain Pathways between Early Childhood Inclusion Policy and Practice. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, **2**, 67-75. <https://doi.org/10.1007/2288-6729-2-1-67>

- [4] Vogiatzi, X.A., Charitaki, G. and Kourkoutas, E. (2021) Assessing Psychometric Properties of the Sentiments, Attitudes and Concerns about Inclusive Education Scale in a Greek-Speaking Sample of In-Service Teachers. *Technology, Knowledge and Learning*, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10758-021-09554-x>
- [5] Odom, S.L., Hanson, M.J., Blackman, J.A., Kau, S. (2003) Early Intervention Practices around the World. Paul H. Brookes, Baltimore, MD.
- [6] Vargas, E.B., Janson, U. and Mufel, N. (2009) Early Childhood Intervention, Special Education and Inclusion: A Focus on Belarus. Regional Office for CEE/CIS and UNICEF.
- [7] Bania, T.A., Antoniou, A.S., Theodoritsi, M., Theodoritsi, I., Charitaki, G. and Billis, E. (2021) The Interaction with Disabled Persons Scale: Translation and Cross-Cultural Validation into Greek. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, **43**, 988-995. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2019.1643420>
- [8] World Health Organization (WHO) (2001) International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health. World Health Organization, Geneva.
- [9] European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2012) Special Need Education Country Data 2012. Odense.
- [10] Meisels, S.J. and Shonkoff, J.P. (2000) Early Childhood Intervention: A Continuing Evaluation. In: Shonkoff, J.P. and Meisels, S.J., Eds., *Handbook of Early Childhood Intervention*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 3-31. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511529320.003>
- [11] Guralnick, M.J., Neville, B., Hammond, M.A. and Connor, R.T (2008) Continuity as Change from Full-Inclusion Early Childhood Programs through the Early Elementary Period. *Journal of Early Intervention*, **30**, 237-250. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1053815108317962>
- [12] Brown, W.H., Odom, S.L. and McConnell, S.R. (Eds.) (2008) Social Competence of Young Children: Risk, Disability and Intervention. Brookes, Baltimore, MD.
- [13] Buyse, V. (2012) Access, Participation, and Supports: A Framework for Improving Inclusive Early Education Opportunities for Children with Disabilities. In: Pianta, R.C., Barnett, W.S., Justice, I.M. and Sheridan, S.M., Eds., *Handbook of Early Childhood Education*, Guilford Press, New York, 480-506.
- [14] Mittler, P. (2005) Working towards Inclusive Education: Social Contexts. David Fulton Publishers, London.
- [15] Slee, R. (2011) The Irregular School: Exclusion, Schooling and Inclusive Education. Routledge, London.
- [16] Loreman, T. (2014) Measuring Inclusive Education Outcomes in Alberta, Canada. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, **18**, 459-483. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2013.788223>
- [17] Barton, E.E. and Smith, B.J. (2015) Advancing High-Quality Preschool Inclusion: A Discussion and Recommendations for the Field. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, **35**, 69-78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0271121415583048>
- [18] Booth, T. and Ainsvow, M. (2002) Index for Inclusion: Developing Learning and Participation at Schools. CSI, Bristol.
- [19] Barnes, C. and Mercer, G. (2004) Social Exclusion and Disabling Barriers. In: Barnes, C. and Mercer, G., Eds., *Exploring Disability: A Sociological Introduction*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 98-126.
- [20] Vislie, L. (2003) From Integration to Inclusion: Focusing Global Trends and Changes in the Western European Countries. *European Journal of Special Needs*

- Education*, **18**, 17-35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0885625082000042294>
- [21] Bania, T.A., Gianniki, M., Giannakoudi, S., Charitaki, G., Matzaroglou, C. and Bilis, E. (2020) The Interaction with Disabled Persons Scale: Evidencing Construct Validity with Factor Analysis and Measurement Invariance in Greek-Speaking Healthcare Students. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2020.1850890>
- [22] DEC/NAEYC (2009) Early Childhood Inclusion: A Joint Position Statement of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Institute, Chapel Hill, NC.
- [23] Odom, S.L. Viztum, J., Wolery, R.A., Lieber, J., Sandall, S.R., Hanson, M., Beckman, P.J., Schwartz, I. and Horn, E. (2004) Preschool Inclusion in the United States: A Review of Research from an Ecological Systems Perspective. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, **4**, 17-49. <https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1471-3802.2004.00016.x>
- [24] Kwon, K., Elicker, J. and Kontos, S. (2011) Social IEP Objectives, Teacher Talk, and Peer Interaction in Inclusive and Segregated Preschool Settings. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, **39**, 267-277. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-011-0469-6>
- [25] Rafferty, Y., Piscitelli, V. and Boetcher, C. (2003) The Impact of Inclusion on Language Development and Social Competence among Preschoolers with Disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, **69**, 467-479. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001440290306900405>
- [26] Phillips, D.A. and Meloy, M. (2012) High-Quality School-Based Pre-K Can Boost Early Learning for Children with Special Needs. *Exceptional Children*, **78**, 471-490. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001440291207800405>
- [27] Green, K.B., Terry, N. and Gallagher, P. (2014) Progress in Language and Literacy Skills among Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Early Reading First Classrooms. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, **33**, 249-259. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0271121413477498>
- [28] Nahmias, A.S., Kase, C. and Mandell, D.S. (2014) Comparing Cognitive Outcomes among Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders Receiving Community-Based Early Intervention in One of Three Placements. *Autism*, **18**, 311-320. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361312467865>
- [29] Warren, S., Martinez, R.S. and Sortino, L.A. (2016) Exploring the Quality Indicators of a Successful Full-Inclusion Preschool Program. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, **30**, 540-553. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2016.1214651>
- [30] Coelho, V., Cadima, J. and Pinto, A.I. (2019) Child Engagement in Inclusive Preschools: Contributions of Classroom Quality and Activity Setting. *Early Education and Development*, **30**, 800-816. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2019.1591046>
- [31] Vlachou, A. (2006) Role of Special/Support Teachers in Greek Primary Schools: A Counterproductive Effect of 'Inclusion' Practices. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, **10**, 39-58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110500221586>
- [32] Sapsford R. (2007) Survey Research. Sage, London. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857024664>
- [33] Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K.R.B. (2011) Research Methods in Education. Routledge, London.
- [34] Antoniou, A.S., Geralexis, I. and Charitaki, G. (2017) Special Educators' Teaching Self-Efficacy Determination: A Quantitative Approach. *Psychology*, **8**, 1642-1656. <https://doi.org/10.4236/psych.2017.811108>

- [35] Wright, A.R.K. (1998) Parental Views of Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in the Preschool Setting. Graduate Faculty of Texas Tech University, Lubbock.
- [36] Rafferty, Y. and Griffin, K.W. (2005) Benefits and Risks of Reverse Inclusion for Preschoolers with and without Disabilities: Perspectives of Parents and Providers. *Journal of Early Intervention*, **27**, 173-192. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105381510502700305>
- [37] Hall, D.A., Zaragoza, D.S., Hamdache, L.Z., Manchaiah, V., Thammaiah, S. and Evans, C. (2018) A Good Practice Guide for Translating and Adapting Hearing-Related Questionnaires for Different Languages and Cultures. *International Journal of Audiology*, **57**, 161-175. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14992027.2017.1393565>
- [38] Tzivinikou, S., Charitaki, G. and Kagkara, D. (2021) Distance Education Attitudes (DEAS) during Covid-19 Crisis: Factor Structure, Reliability and Construct Validity of the Brief DEA Scale in Greek-Speaking SEND Teachers. *Technology, Knowledge and Learning*, **26**, 461-479. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10758-020-09483-1>
- [39] Monsen, J.J., Ewing, D.L. and Kwoka, M. (2014) Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusion, Perceived Adequacy of Support and Classroom Learning Environment. *Learning Environments Research*, **17**, 113-126. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10984-013-9144-8>
- [40] Saloviita, T. (2018) Attitudes of Teachers towards Inclusive Education in Finland. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, **64**, 270-282. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2018.1541819>
- [41] Zoniou-Sideri, A. and Vlachou, A. (2006) Greek Teachers' Belief Systems about Disability and Inclusive Education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, **10**, 379-394. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110500430690>
- [42] Charitaki, G., Soulis, S.G. and Alevriadou, A. (2021) Factor Structure of Early Numeracy: Evaluation of a Measurement Model in Greek-Speaking Children with Intellectual Disabilities. *International Journal of Developmental Disabilities*, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20473869.2021.1950496>