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Relationship between Affection and Behaviour towards Inclusive Education among the Preservice Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between affection and behaviour in inclusive education is an important topic to explore. Affection refers to the positive feelings and emotions that individuals have towards others, while behavior refers to the actions and reactions of individuals in response to various stimuli. The relationship between preservice teachers' affection for behaviour in inclusive education was examined in this study. This study exploited quantitative design and made use of the survey method. 254 respondents who enrolled in a teacher training programme for their bachelor's degree received a set of questionnaire. The Statistical Software Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 was used to analyse the quantitative data of this study. The inferential data was evaluated using Spearman correlation due to the non-normal data distribution, whilst the descriptive data was given in mean and standard deviation. The study's results showed that both variables, preservice teachers' level of affection and their level of behaviour towards inclusive education were at low and very low levels, respectively ($M=17.63$; $SD=5.55$; $M=25.76$; $SD=3.67$). However, the results of the inferential statistics revealed a weak significant relationship between the degree of affection for inclusive education and the degree of behaviour towards it ($\rho=.32$, $p<.01$). To conclude, preservice teachers' positive attitudes and emotions towards inclusive education can influence their behaviour towards it. The study suggests that fostering a positive attitude towards inclusive education can help teachers to become more effective in inclusive classrooms. Overall, the study's findings contribute to our understanding of the relationship between affection and behaviour in inclusive education, and the importance of promoting positive attitudes towards it.

Keywords: Affection, Behaviour, Inclusive Education, Preservice teachers, Teacher training programme, Spearman correlation

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between affection and behavior towards inclusive education among preservice teachers is an important area of study. Research has shown that preservice teachers' attitudes and beliefs play a crucial role in the successful implementation of inclusive education practices (Massé et al., 2022; Franziska, & Anke, 2019; Carla, et al., 2022). The literature suggests that preservice teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education are influenced by various factors, including their beliefs, experiences, and training during their teacher education programmes. Attitudes toward inclusion are often conceptualised

using the tripartite attitude theory, which includes affective, cognitive, and behavioural components (Mahat, 2008).

The affective component refers to the emotional response or feeling of comfort or uneasiness that preservice teachers experience in relation to the inclusion of students with diverse needs in regular classrooms. The cognitive component involves the knowledge and understanding of the benefits and challenges of inclusive education. The behavioural component reflects the willingness and intention of preservice teachers to take action and promote inclusive practices in their future classrooms (Massé et al., 2022). Research has indicated that preservice teachers who hold positive attitudes toward inclusive education are more likely to implement inclusive strategies and practices in their classrooms (Massé et al., 2022). Therefore, it is crucial to examine and understand the factors that shape preservice teachers' attitudes towards inclusion during their teacher education programmes.

Several studies have investigated interventions aimed at improving preservice teachers' attitudes toward inclusion. These interventions have shown promising results in fostering more positive attitudes. Information-based cognitive interventions, as well as interventions combining information and practical field experience, have been reported to lead to more positive attitudes toward inclusion (Franziska, & Anke, 2019).

Moreover, individual characteristics of preservice teachers, such as gender, age, and personality traits, have been found to have some influence on their attitudes toward inclusion. However, more research is needed to understand the specific relationships between these individual characteristics and attitudes towards inclusive education (Carla, et al., 2022).

To summarise, the relationship between affection (attitudes) and behaviour towards inclusive education among preservice teachers is a complex and multifaceted topic. Preservice teachers' attitudes towards inclusion are influenced by their affective, cognitive, and behavioural components. Interventions during teacher education programmes that provide information and practical experiences have shown promise in promoting more positive attitudes. Further research is needed to explore the relationships between individual characteristics, such as personality traits, and attitudes towards inclusive education among preservice teachers. Understanding and addressing these relationships can contribute to the design of effective training programmes and interventions that prepare preservice teachers for inclusive education practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Inclusive education is a concept that has gained significant attention in the field of education. It involves providing equal opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities, within the regular education system (UNESCO, 2020). Understanding the attitudes and perceptions of pre-service teachers towards inclusive education is crucial for promoting its effective implementation in schools.

Tebatso, & Md Mirajur (2021) provides an overview of inclusive education from various scholars' perspectives. It examines definitions, attitudes, and pedagogical challenges associated with inclusive education. The review discusses the attitudes of pupils, educators, and parents towards inclusive education, as well as the dilemmas faced by teachers and students with disabilities in modern education systems. It also highlights instructional approaches for planning and executing lessons with diverse students' aptitudes.

This systematic review focuses on interventions aimed at improving pre-service teachers' attitudes towards inclusion within the university context. The review identifies and describes intervention studies that assess pre-service teachers' attitudes quantitatively before and after planned and structured interventions. The findings suggest that both information-based cognitive interventions and interventions combining information and practical field experience can lead to more positive attitudes towards inclusion (Franziska, & Anke, 2019).

Another review specifically focuses on pre-service teachers' attitudes towards inclusion in early childhood classrooms. It explores the factors that shape pre-service teachers' dispositions towards students with disabilities. The review emphasises the importance of understanding the attitudes conducive to implementing inclusive education effectively. Several factors can influence preservice teachers' behavior towards inclusive education. These factors include their own beliefs and efficacy in

working with students with disabilities. Teacher education programs that provide comprehensive training and support in inclusive practices can positively influence preservice teachers' behavior. The importance of ongoing professional development and in-service training programmes for enhancing teachers' attitudes and practices towards inclusion has also been emphasised (Yu, & Cho, 2022).

Inclusive education is a complex concept that requires understanding, support, and positive attitudes from preservice teachers. This literature review highlights the significance of interventions aimed at improving preservice teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, as well as the pedagogical challenges they face. It emphasises the need for comprehensive teacher education programmes and ongoing professional development to foster inclusive practices among preservice teachers (Franziska, & Anke, 2019; Yu, & Cho, 2022). It is worth noting that the relationship between affection and behavior towards inclusive education among pre-service teachers can be complex and multifaceted. Other factors, such as prior experiences, education and training, institutional support, and cultural context, also play a significant role in shaping their attitudes and behaviors towards inclusive education.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Undergraduate students enrolled in an inclusive education course during the second semester of 2022–2023 made up the 254 respondents. Google Forms was used to develop this cross-sectional online survey since it was a realistic way to make data collection simpler. The students enthusiastically agreed and actively participated in the study.

Ethics

The director of the Institute of Teacher Education Tun Abdul Razak Campus gave her consent for the study in accordance with the guidelines of the International Declaration of Helsinki (2022). The respondents were informed of the purpose of the study, its voluntariness, confidentiality, and anonymity, and their consent was obtained.

Measures

The behavioural affinity of preservice teachers towards inclusive education was assessed using the Preservice Teachers' Behavioural Affection towards Inclusive Education Scale (PTBAIES) (2023). It offers practical insights into preservice teachers' attitudes, intentions, and behaviours that can inform professional development activities, policy decisions, and teacher education programmes (Sadeh & Shonfeld, 2019). The scale provides a comprehensive framework for assessing how committed and ready preservice teachers are for inclusive education, allowing for focused interventions to address any potential gaps and issues.

10 items make up the PTBAIES, which covers affective and behavioural traits in two different dimensions. The PTBAIES are measured using a 6-point Likert scale with a range of 1 (Strongly Agree) to 6 (Strongly Disagree). The PTBAIES's affective (.78), behavioural (.86), and overall (.80) scores demonstrate high internal consistency.

RESULTS AND FINDING

Demographic Profile of Respondents

A total of 254 responses were given by all respondents. A comprehensive summary of the respondents' backgrounds is given in Tables 1, 2, and 3. It is noteworthy that the respondents were largely Malay (53.9%), Sarawak Native (32.7%), Sabah (10.6%), and Chinese (2.8%), with 189 females (74.4%) and 65 males (25.6%). Malay language was chosen as the major option by 37.4% of the participants, Islamic education by 33.9%, TESL by 14.2%, and physical education by 14.6%.

Table 1: Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	65	25.6	25.6
Female	189	74.4	100.0
Total	254	100.0	

Table 2: Race

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Malay	137	53.9	53.9
Chinese	7	2.8	56.7
Sarawak Native	83	32.7	89.4
Sabah Native	27	10.6	100.0
Total	254	100.0	

Table 3: Options

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Malay Language	95	37.4	37.4
Islamic Education	86	33.9	71.3
TESL	36	14.2	85.4
Physical Education	37	14.6	100.0
Total	254	100.0	

Normality Test

Due to the non-normal data distribution, Spearman correlation was used to determine the association between preservice teachers' affection and behaviour towards inclusive education. Skewness and kurtosis tests were used by researchers to analyse the data distribution of the relevant variables. According to Kim (2013), acceptable Z values for skewness and kurtosis should be found in the range of -3.29 to 3.29. In Table 4, the skewness Z value was at .176, whereas the kurtosis Z value was at 3.85. As a result, this study rejected the premise that the data were normal.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics

	N Statistic	Minimum Statistic	Maximum Statistic	Mean Statistic	Std. Deviation Statistic	Skewness		Kurtosis	
						Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Affection	254	5	30	17.63	5.554	.027	.153	-.207	.304
Behavioural	254	15	30	25.76	3.674	-.589	.153	-.295	.304
Valid N (listwise)	254								

Interpretative Scale for the Study Variables

Each study variable was correctly assigned an interpretative scale for the sake of interpretation in descriptive analysis in accordance with the mathematical formula suggested by Gravetter and Wallnau (2015). Researchers have established five value labels or divisions for each variable, as shown in Table 5, in order to standardise the interpretation for descriptive analysis on the overall level of the variables. For instance, very low, low, moderate, high, and very high levels.

Table 5: Interpretative scale for PTBAIES

Value	Value Level
10.00 – 20.00	Very low
20.01 – 30.00	Low
30.01 – 40.00	Moderate
40.01 – 50.00	High
50.01 – 60.00	Very high

Level on Preservice Teachers’ Behavioural Affection toward Inclusive Education

In Table 5, descriptive analysis demonstrates the total PTBAIES was at a high level (M=43.39; SD=7.563). Behavioural (M=25.76; SD=3.674) and affective (M=17.63; SD=5.554) scores are at low and very low level respectively.

Relationship between Affection and Behaviour towards Inclusive Education

The internal consistency coefficient of Cronbach's alpha was used to calculate the reliability of the items for the final PTBAIES. Nunnally (1994) asserts that a Cronbach's alpha value larger than or equal to 0.70 is necessary for good reliability.

Table 6: Correlations

		Affection	Behaviour
Spearman’s rho	Affection	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.323**
		N	254
	Behaviour	Correlation Coefficient	.323**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
		N	254

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 6 indicated a weak and significant relationship between the level of affection and the level of behaviour towards inclusive education ($\rho=.32, p<.01$).

DISCUSSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Consistent with the findings of this study, research has shown that preservice teachers' attitudes toward inclusion play a crucial role in their behavior and practices regarding inclusive education. Attitudes toward inclusion encompass affective, cognitive, and behavioral components. Preservice teachers who hold positive attitudes toward inclusive education are more likely to implement strategies that promote an inclusive paradigm in their classrooms. These positive attitudes are influenced by various factors, including contextual characteristics related to the environment, such as teacher education and contact with students with diverse needs, as well as individual characteristics like self-efficacy (Massé et al., 2022)

A weak relationship between affection and behaviour suggests that preservice teachers may struggle to translate their positive attitudes or beliefs about inclusive education into practical actions and behaviors in the classroom. This implementation gap can hinder the effective inclusion of students with diverse needs and may result in missed opportunities for creating an inclusive learning environment (Aeshah, & Rumpasri, 2023).

Preservice teachers who lack strong affection or positive emotional attitudes towards inclusive education may require additional support and guidance during their teacher training programmes. Teacher preparation programmes can play a crucial role in addressing this issue by providing

comprehensive training and professional development opportunities that focus on developing positive attitudes, empathy, and inclusive instructional strategies (Aeshah, & Rumpasri, 2023).

Preservice teachers' behaviors and attitudes towards inclusive education can significantly impact students with diverse needs. A weak relationship between affection and behavior suggests that preservice teachers may struggle to provide the necessary support and accommodations for students with disabilities or behavioral difficulties. This lack of support can potentially lead to negative academic and social outcomes for these students (Massé et al., 2022).

Identifying the weak relationship between affection and behavior can serve as a starting point for intervention and improvement strategies. Teacher education programmes can develop targeted interventions that aim to bridge the gap between positive attitudes and actual classroom practices. These interventions may focus on enhancing preservice teachers' self-efficacy, providing hands-on experiences in inclusive classrooms, promoting collaboration with colleagues and professionals, and fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment during their training (Aeshah, & Rumpasri, 2023).

Continuing professional development for inservice teachers can also address the weak relationship between affection and behavior. Training programmes and workshops can help teachers develop the necessary skills, knowledge, and strategies to effectively implement inclusive practices in their classrooms. Ongoing support and mentorship can further strengthen teachers' positive attitudes towards inclusion and their ability to translate those attitudes into inclusive behaviors (Aeshah, & Rumpasri, 2023).

In conclusion, a weak relationship between affection and behavior towards inclusive education among preservice teachers highlights the importance of addressing this gap through targeted interventions, comprehensive teacher training programmes, ongoing professional development, and supportive learning environments. By enhancing preservice teachers' attitudes and providing them with the necessary tools and support, we can promote inclusive education and improve outcomes for students with diverse needs.

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