



Article

Teaching Attitudes towards Students with Disabilities

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Abstract: (1) Background: Inclusive education has been a recurring topic during the last decades. However, not every teacher is equally enthusiastic about how to implement it. Understanding these discrepancies can help to identify improvement procedures. Therefore, even though teachers' beliefs and attitudes around inclusion have been thoroughly explored, it is necessary to delve further on this type of study to understand possible changes derived from the socio-educational transformations experimented by current societies. (2) Methods: This study examined the attitudes of 122 teachers, both Primary and Special Needs ones, working in rural and urban schools, regarding inclusion of students with disabilities. The data were collected from two scales: Attitude Survey Inclusive Education–Teachers (ASIE-T) and Scale for Measuring Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions about Inclusion the Sentiments, Attitudes and Concerns about Inclusive Education Revised (SACIE-R). A quantitative approach was employed, of descriptive and correlational type. Descriptive and inferential analyses were performed by means of parametric tests. Furthermore, the bivariate correlation technique Person's r was carried out in order to verify the intensity among variables. The effect sizes are provided as Cohen's d . (3) Results: The results revealed positive beliefs concerning inclusion and the existence of differences among teachers, depending on their specialisation and gender. The variables "age" and "stage of education" were not significant in terms of generating in terms of attitude generation. (4) Conclusions: Understanding the association between socio-demographic variables and stigma is crucial when it comes to accomplishing an inclusive and high-quality education. The general findings of this study contribute to justify the implementation of programmes to stimulate and encourage meaningful interactions between general education teachers and students with disabilities.

Keywords: attitudes; disabilities; inclusive education; teacher education



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1. Introduction

People with disabilities have been frequently stigmatised and, in turn, underestimated throughout history. It is considered that the stigma on disability involves harmful effects regarding this collective's socio-educational inclusion [1]. In this respect, the attitudes and beliefs of society, in general, and teachers, in particular, represent a major research field, as they inform about teaching ideas and practices which may condition the inclusion of the most underprivileged students within regular schools.

Indeed, one of the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 to contribute to tackle inequality is the effort to achieve an inclusive and quality education in all educational and social areas. This precedent acknowledges the need to carry out studies to explore different realities and to implement improvement practices contributing to mitigate the possible impediments which hinder the fulfilment of a fully inclusive education. Actually, inclusive education has been a recurring topic in the educational reforms from the last decades [2]. Therefore, teachers are perceived as one of the most prominent factors when encouraging or obstructing inclusion processes. Their beliefs are going to be defining for the behaviours observed within the classrooms, as these conceptions have an enormous influence on the teachers' attitudes and inclusive practices when it comes to meeting the needs of students with disabilities [3].

The most developed countries commit themselves to guaranteeing an inclusive education, aimed at improving the quality of life and well-being of all the people in their communities [4]. Therefore, inclusive education can be understood as a dynamic and continuous process of organisational and pedagogical reorganisation. Its major aim is preventing student segregation and isolation, assuming diversity and advocating for a common syllabus for all pupils based on different basic principles, such as equal opportunities, educational equity and social justice. From this perspective, teachers' attitudes are considered as one of the most decisive and predictive factors regarding human behaviour when it comes to encouraging inclusion processes. Attitudes determine the way in which the teachers behave in front of their students. They predispose them to behave in a predictable way in front of their students, as they predetermine their ideas and feelings. Nevertheless, attitudes vary depending on the context, even on the moment, and their understanding is challenging. Thus, they can be approached from very different perspectives, given their multidimensional nature.

It is commonly admitted that three components can be found in attitudes [5,6]: affective, cognitive and behavioural. The cognitive component reflects people's beliefs towards inclusive education; it comprises thoughts, ideas, perceptions, opinions and the mental conceptualisation of this referent (e.g., the right for children with disabilities to attend regular schools). The affective component focuses on the feelings and alludes to the positive and negative emotions concerning a specific group, in this case, people with disabilities (e.g., concerns about including a disabled child within a regular classroom). Finally, the behavioural component revolves around the tendency to act in a particular way when faced with a disability. It also reveals the disposition to behave in a certain manner (e.g., sharing an event with a child with disabilities).

Ajzen and Fishbein [7] attribute a predictive value to attitudes as far as human behaviour is concerned. Greater research effort is still required to elucidate the manifold unknown aspects still concerning this topic. However, it is probable that teachers' attitudes towards inclusion depend on the knowledge that teachers possess about people with disabilities [8]. Nonetheless, the variable "training" did not always deliver consistent results. Generally speaking, it is estimated that inclusion acceptance is higher if teaching professionals benefit from interaction with disabled students [9,10].

However, the considerable research in this field of study is not congruent. While some studies call for improvements in the teachers' beliefs and attitudes [11,12], other research has registered positive attitudes towards educational inclusion [13,14]. Different variables (e.g., recognition of rights, a better knowledge of disabilities, a higher social sensitivity, etc.) justify the existence of different perceptions and the logical evolution of the professionals' ideas regarding the concept of inclusion. Certainly, the attitudes towards people with disabilities are not homogeneous. Thus, research results have revealed that people with intellectual disability (ID) benefit from less acceptance than people identifying with other disabilities. For instance, the findings by Gordon et al. [15] evidenced that people suffering from mental disorders and ID were the population less likely to form new friendships with.

In any case, various factors could affect personal attitudes towards people with disabilities, including gender, education level, age, knowledge of people with disabilities, and the number of years working with these individuals [16]. The socio-demographic variables conditioning the teachers' attitudes are diverse, so it is imperative to explore them in order to know their current ideas. This is especially important considering that research cannot be considered out of its context or time [17] but related to the place, moment and specific educational stage, given the evolution experimented by the postulates supporting attention to diversity.

It seems that positive attitudes towards inclusion are increased and have a more beneficial impact the longer teachers have been working in a school [18,19]. This is also true when they are in regular contact with people with disabilities [20,21]. In this respect, attitudes are more positive the more frequent those favourable and significant experiences with disabled people are [22]. Curiously, the teachers counting with less working experience

are more supportive of developing inclusion processes [23]. Accordingly, Alnahdi et al. [24] refer to the inter-group contact theory to suggest that interactions can reduce prejudices between majority and minority groups. Consequently, it can be concluded that inter-group contact contributes to reducing the stigma suffered by people with disabilities.

It has also been proposed that female teachers are more prone to educational inclusion than their male counterparts. Age has also been considered a major predictor of inclusive attitudes among teachers. Indeed, different studies, although not all of them [25], have proved that women tend to display a more positive attitude than men towards people with disabilities [26,27]. Other research has found that age is negatively correlated to favourable attitudes towards inclusion [28]. There are other studies as well which exposed that younger people have more positive perceptions towards people with disabilities [29,30] or, conversely, that age is not a decisive variable affecting attitudes with respect to this group of people [31].

Additional studies have evidenced inconsistent results regarding the incidence of other variables on inclusion processes. Previous research did not find that the type of school or educational stage could be influential as far as their capacity is concerned to generate negative attitudes towards inclusion [11,32]. In any case, according to Morin et al. [6], the research results are neither consistent nor definitive, as for the associations between socio-demographic variables and the attitudes towards people with disabilities, especially those affected by ID. If contact with people suffering from ID is left aside, the studies reveal opposed findings. As mentioned above, while some research reflected that negative attitudes increased with participants' age [6,29], other studies did not identify age to have any effect on that respect [33]. Furthermore, differences according to gender are not coincidental either. There are studies which found divergences between men and women [33], while others detected a more positive attitude in women than in men [34]. In any case, it is commonly accepted that unfavourable beliefs and attitudes toward inclusion compromise the development of inclusive education [35–37]. Providing frequent contact with people with disabilities can improve teachers' acceptance of children with disabilities.

Within this context, the present study researched the attitudes of working teachers towards inclusion. It also analysed some of the socio-demographic variables conditioning those attitudes, such as the teachers' specialising branch (training), gender, type of school, age and educational stage.

2. Materials and Methods

A non-experimental study was conducted, descriptive (it was observed what happens with the phenomenon under study in natural conditions, without an intention of establishing cause relationships with other variables), cross-sectional (the data collection was performed in just one moment in time) and correlational (the intention was to detect or clarify the existing relationships among the variables, by means of correlation coefficients employed to know the degree, intensity and the direction of relationships among variables).

2.1. Participants

One-hundred-and-twenty-two active teaching professionals participated in the study ($M = 42.91$, $SD = 8.02$), working in different rural and urban state (62.1%), state-funded private (27.2%) and fully private (10.7%) schools. The educational centres were located in diverse cities and towns in south-east Spain. Nearly two-thirds (65.7%) of teachers were female, while the remaining 34.3% were male. Regarding their distribution per educational stage, 32.6% were Pre-school teachers, and 67.2% were Primary education teachers. Over one-quarter (27.2%) of participants were working in Special Needs education. Thus, the participation's voluntary character implied that the study's sample was mostly constituted by Primary education and, to a lesser extent, Pre-school teachers. Special Needs teachers had a more marginal participation. Most of the teachers had a teaching experience below 10 years. Generally speaking, their teaching practice mostly spanned between 4 and 8 years (74.45%).

Therefore, the participating teachers are very diverse, not only because of their schools' locations, but also due to the particular features of such educational centres. Some teach in rural areas, while others work in big urban agglomerations; some of them teach in public schools, which are owned and funded by the state, while others work in state-funded but privately owned and managed schools, called *colegios concertados* in Spanish. Finally, another group of teachers carry out their labour in private schools, which are funded, owned and managed completely by private entities. These differentiated contexts allow for a wider informative flow and a greater explanatory variety. All of this contributes to a better approach to the topic under study.

2.2. Instruments

The data were collected from two scales: (1) Attitude Survey Inclusive Education–Teachers (ASIE-T) [38] and (2) Scale for Measuring Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions about Inclusion the Sentiments, Attitudes and Concerns about Inclusive Education Revised (SACIE-R) [18].

ASIE-T is a scale investigating two factors: the behavioural predisposition in the face of the inclusion challenge and the beliefs as teachers within a diverse classroom. This scale is validated for the Spanish context by Álvarez and Buenestado [39]. The scale measures general attitude towards inclusive education (teachers' beliefs, feelings and behavioural intentions), comprising cognitive, affective and behavioural responses. It possesses a high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.83$) and, therefore, a high reliability. It includes 17 Likert-type items (1 = *completely disagree*, 4 = *completely agree*).

The SACIE-R scale explores the work of teachers depending on the students' diversity. It analyses the feelings, attitudes and concerns of teachers regarding inclusive education. The Sentiments subscale assesses sentiments when interacting with people with special educational needs. The Attitudes subscale measures the acceptance by teachers of students with the special educational needs. The Concerns subscale focuses on the teacher's personal concerns about special educational needs students' inclusion in their own class. It includes 12 Likert-type items (1 = *completely disagree*, 4 = *completely agree*). It is also validated for the Spanish context by Rodríguez et al. [40], counting with an acceptable reliability level for pre-service teachers ($\alpha = 0.67$), and being high for working teachers ($\alpha = 0.80$).

2.3. Procedure

The data were collected during the last term of the school year 2019/2020.

Initially, the participants were informed about the intentions and objectives of the study. Their voluntary participation was also requested. They were assured about their data confidentiality and their informed consent was required. Their anonymity was guaranteed in accordance with the ethical guidelines established by the University of Granada (Spain). The study meets the recognised standards established in the Declaration of Helsinki.

Later, those who wished to participate in the study, were sent both measurement instruments online, by means of the creations of surveys with the *Doc* tool in Google/Gmail.

2.4. Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis was conducted with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS v.24, ©IBM New York, NY, USA). Descriptive and inferential analyses were performed by means of parametric tests. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was employed to verify the data normalisation and their variances' homoscedasticity. The Exploratory Factor Analysis and the calculation of Cronbach's α allowed to check the reliability of the scale's dimensions (factors). The Student's *t* tests, for independent samples, and the ANOVA of a factor permitted elucidating the statistical relationship among the variables, as well as the teachers' attitude in the face of inclusion. The effect sizes are provided as Cohen's *d*. Finally, it was carried out the bivariate correlation technique Person's *r* in order to verify the intensity among variables. The confidence level was established at $p < 0.05$.

3. Results

3.1. Findings of the Exploratory Factor Analysis

By means of this statistical technique, it was intended to establish an underlying structure among the variables under analysis, that is, define groups of factors highly correlated with each other. The intention was to explore with a higher precision the latent variables of the observed factors in order to check the level of adequacy of the employed instruments.

The scales' reliability was checked with optimal results, being high for the SACIE-R scale: $\alpha_{\text{SACIE-R}} = 0.80$, with three factors after the exploratory factor analysis ($\alpha_{\text{perception}} = 0.79$, $\alpha_{\text{feelings}} = 0.70$, $\alpha_{\text{concerns}} = 0.81$). It was acceptable for the ASIE-T scale: $\alpha_{\text{ASIE-T}} = 0.70$, with two resulting factors ($\alpha_{\text{predisposition}} = 0.67$ and $\alpha_{\text{beliefs}} = 0.78$). The most relevant results stemming from this study are presented hereafter.

3.2. Findings of the Descriptive Analysis

The data collected in the descriptive analysis reveal a positive attitude towards educational inclusion among teachers. Thus, the highest number of answers falls on value 3 (out of 4), corresponding to the category *agree* ($M = 3.01$), for all the assessed dimensions (Table 1), which demonstrates an acceptable attitudinal level. For all the items and factors, the sum of positive values ("agree" = 3 and "completely agree" = 4) was higher than that of the negative ones ("completely disagree" = 1 and "disagree" = 2). Globally speaking, it was reached a level of agreement of 75.54% with the inclusive postulates enquired through the items.

Table 1. Correlationals among attitudinal factors (1a, 2a, 3a, 1b, 2b).

SCALE	Factors of the First (1a, 2a and 3a) and Second (1b and 2b) Surveys	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mo</i>	% <i>Mo</i>
SACIE-R	1a. Perception about the inclusive education practice	2.95	0.95	3	41.45
	2a. Feelings when faced with disabilities/disorder	2.69	0.63	3	35.66
	3a. Concerns about inclusive requirements	2.72	0.56	3	37.71
ASIE-T	1b. Behavioural predisposition before the inclusive challenge	2.99	0.80	3	45.23
	2b. Inclusive beliefs as a teacher within a diverse classroom	3.23	0.90	3	44.26

Note. *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation; *Mo* = Mode; % *Mo* = Mode percentage.

Regarding the factors, this level of agreement differed between the tendency to 80% (factor $b1 = 77.04\%$ and factor $b2 = 82.71\%$) of the ASIE-T instrument, and the tendency to 70% of the SACIE-R instrument (factor $a1 = 73.88\%$; factor $a2 = 72.23\%$; factor $a3 = 82.71\%$). It is curious to highlight how the factors belonging to the first measurement instruments obtained a score considerably lower than those in the second one. They also counted with lower deviations. Such distancing was significant ($t(130) = 5.19$, $p = 0.04$), although the size of differences was only moderate ($d = 0.54$). Besides the distinctive nature of questions presented by both scales, this difference could be justified because the second instrument starts from an actual case, and this leads the participating teachers to empathise more with the presented case (this scale focuses on the specific case of a student with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). This could be especially significant for the general education teachers counting with little experience, who may not be so conscious about the existence of diverse students and their special needs.

Given the constructive character of this study, it would be advisable to underline the lowest-scoring factors. This implies focusing now on factor 1a, about "feelings when faced with disabilities/disorder and educational intervention", as well as on factor 3a, "concerns about inclusive requirements within the classroom". Actually, these factors could offer a dilemmatic interpretation. On the one hand, the fact that these teachers display feelings towards diverse students and that they are concerned about the inclusive requirements could be considered positive: it encourages motivation and dedication to their students thanks to the feelings awakened and the necessary implication and consideration for such

phenomena given the concerns generated by the teaching exigence. On the other hand, it may also involve fewer positive repercussions, such as compassion, loss of exigence, didactic detachment and instructional inaction.

3.3. Findings of the Correlational and Inferential Analysis

In order to assess to the consistency of attitude as a whole, the relationship among its constituent dimensions or factors was calculated. Those participants with a higher score in some items were also expected to score high on the others, and vice versa. However, the correlational analysis (Table 2) revealed an absent or scarce correlation among the attitudinal dimensions under study. Thus, there were moderate relations, direct and significant, between “perception” and “predisposition”, as well as between “beliefs” and the rest of dimensions, except for “feelings”. Therefore, it was not revealed a very robust pattern among the displayed attitudes.

Table 2. Correlationals among attitudinal factors (1a, 2a, 3a, 1b, 2b).

Factors	2a. Feelings	3a. Concerns	1b. Predisposition	2b. Beliefs
1a. Perception	$r = 0.34, p = 0.003^{**}$	$r = 0.44, p = 0.015^*$	$r = 0.65, p = 0.006^{**}$	$r = 0.77, p = 0.020^*$
2a. Feelings		$r = 0.19, p = 0.025^*$	$r = 0.28, p = 0.031^*$	$r = 0.22, p = 0.047^*$
3a. Concerns			$r = 0.13, p = 0.003^{**}$	$r = 0.65, p = 0.033^*$
1b. Predisposition				$r = 0.67, p = 0.023^*$

Note. ****** The correlationals are statistically significant ($p < 0.01$), $* p < 0.05$; $r =$ Pearson’s correlation coefficient.

Regarding the inferential analysis (Table 3), differences per specialisation branch were registered in a general level. Therefore, it was proved that those professionals who were working exclusively with children with special educational needs displayed a more positive attitude towards inclusion than all their other colleagues working in Pre-school or Primary education levels. Gender also entailed significant differences, as female participants showed a better inclusive attitudinal pattern. The variables “school”, “age” and “educational stage” were not defining.

Table 3. Differences according to independent variables (specialisation branch, gender, school, age and educational stage).

Factors	Perception	Feelings	Concerns	Predisposition	Beliefs
Specialisation	$F = 4.58,$ $p = 0.005^{**}; d = 0.69$	$F = 8.34,$ $p = 0.002^{**}; d = 0.71$	$F = 12.12,$ $p = 0.000^{**}; d = 0.88$	$F = 10.58,$ $p = 0.003^{**}; d = 0.70$	$F = 2.18,$ $p = 0.525; d = 0.13$
Gender	$t = 3.34,$ $p = 0.008^{**}; d = 0.44$	$t = 6.36,$ $p = 0.004^{**}; d = -0.52$	$t = 13.34,$ $p = 0.001^{**}; d = -0.68$	$t = 2.22,$ $p = 0.088; d = -0.26$	$t = 1.17,$ $p = 0.163; d = -0.19$
School	$F = 1.12,$ $p = 0.281; d = 0.11$	$F = 2.06,$ $p = 0.086; d = 0.10$	$F = 1.51,$ $p = 0.394; d = 0.19$	$F = 0.99,$ $p = 0.395; d = 0.17$	$F = 0.85,$ $p = 0.551; d = 0.09$
Age	$F = 2.22,$ $p = 0.012^*; d = 0.32$	$F = 1.35,$ $p = 0.499; d = 0.12$	$F = 1.17,$ $p = 0.495; d = 0.11$	$F = 2.04,$ $p = 0.084; d = 0.22$	$F = 1.99,$ $p = 0.121; d = 0.18$
Educational stage	$t = 1.25,$ $p = 0.372; d = 0.14$	$t = 0.82,$ $p = 0.923; d = 0.07$	$t = 0.91,$ $p = 0.421; d = 0.11$	$t = 1.01,$ $p = 0.372; d = 0.13$	$t = 1.56,$ $p = 0.782; d = 0.10$

Note. ****** The difference in means is statistically significant ($p < 0.01$); $* p < 0.05$; $F =$ ANOVA, $t =$ Student’s t ; $d =$ Cohen’s d .

4. Discussion

Societies are becoming increasingly more diverse, and schools are also affected by that reality. Progressively, those underprivileged and more vulnerable students should be given the chance to enjoy the same opportunities as their peers, participating in non-restrictive educational contexts. Educational equity and an increase in the actual participation of disabled collectives will occur when the barriers and possible stigmas conditioning their progress are confronted. Within this task, the creation of positive attitudes and respect towards diversity plays a crucial role, acknowledging people’s heterogeneity. A key figure in the manifestation of inclusive education is the teacher.

Previous literature has revealed that attitudes constitute a key factor towards the inclusion of students with special educational needs [7]. Accordingly, the development of positive attitudes towards inclusion would increase if there were a more comprehensive

knowledge of the significance and scope of inclusive education [41]. Therefore, this study's purpose was to investigate the attitudes of working teachers towards inclusion, taking into account different socio-demographic aspects such as gender, specialisation branch, educational stage, age or school.

In principle, the data from the study revealed that teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of children with special needs is moderately positive, although it is clearly improvable too. This conclusion matches the results from previous studies [11,13,14,42–45]. Indeed, as far as attitude is concerned, there is ample room for improvement, which calls for the development of a better behaviour when faced with the diverse situations or occurrences related to inclusion. This finding is consistent with results stemming from previous research [46,47].

Certain differences regarding the socio-demographic variables have also been pinpointed. Indeed, the teachers' specialisation branch revealed significant differences between Special Needs education professionals, on the one hand, and Pre-school and Primary education teachers, on the other hand. Nevertheless, it is also important to distinguish between quantity and quality of the contact with students with special needs, particularly when no associations have been found regarding sensory disabilities [24]. It would seem that enjoying less contact with disabled people and with students with special educational needs generates a certain prejudice which can only be overcome thanks to interaction with students counting with these characteristics. It is probable that teachers' attitudes towards inclusion mainly depend on the knowledge that they possess about disabilities as well as their feelings and predisposition to interrelate with these people [8,10]. Different studies conducted with samples of general education teachers blame their scarce disposition to participate in inclusive education contexts on their lack of training. Another identified cause of this problem was the adversity they face in order to implement it [48]. Indeed, the limited training of teachers concerning disabilities and pedagogical methodologies encouraging inclusion becomes a relevant obstacle for a successful inclusive education. It is urgent the development of a greater concern to identify and criticise those obstacles hindering inclusion processes.

Our findings also revealed, in accord with previous research [26,27,39,49,50], that female teachers displayed more positive attitudes towards inclusive education than their male counterparts. However, this finding is opposed to the results from other recent studies [11,14,25,51]. Nonetheless, research suggests that women usually feel more efficient concerning inclusive education, as well as more responsible for the education of students with disabilities [35].

The variable "school" does not seem significant when dealing with attitude generation. "Educational centre" cannot be considered as a predicting variable for negative views towards inclusion [11,32]. Similarly, the variable "educational stage" was not crucial either. Even though previous research unveiled significant differences between the attitude of Primary and Secondary education teachers [14,52,53], the data from our study did not reveal such differences concerning their attitudinal patterns. The same applies to the variable "age". Generally speaking, our study produced inconsistent results, as previously stated by other researchers [31]. Nevertheless, previous findings confirmed that unfavourable attitudes towards integration were higher the older the teachers were, given that it is negatively correlated with the identified general positive attitude [19,28]. It would seem that younger teachers are the ones displaying a better attitude towards inclusion [23,29,30].

Nonetheless, the teaching professionals' concerns or fears when working in inclusive educational contexts are not recent, and they seem to persist within their belief system [43]. Possibly, a more affective bond with inclusive education and the development of more positive attitudes towards inclusion can only be achieved if there exists a more frequent and intense direct contact with these students. It should always stem from an actual and continuous interaction between teachers and students [8,10,11,13]. This might be an appropriate method to overcome those segregating attitudes still persisting against

the most vulnerable groups within our educational system. Thus, an attitudinal change could be encouraged [54], drawing us closer to the horizon of inclusion. Inclusive teacher education is not a special education for teachers in regular schools [55,56].

5. Limitations and Future Research

Nevertheless, this study has some limitations. First, the sample is not representative of all the teachers working in those educational stages. Besides, they are not very experienced in general; therefore, their perceptions and beliefs towards inclusion could change during their later working life.

In any case, further research is required, both qualitative and quantitative, in order to elucidate the teachers' attitudinal profile. This element constitutes the cornerstone on which to build inclusive and quality education. It would be advisable to continue with this line of research, which calls for a contextualisation in specific times and scenarios. This, in turn, constraints its generalisation. The limitations intrinsic to this study would be overcome provided that its scope is extended to other teachers (from different educational contexts and stages), with representative samples of all teachers (by means of mathematical calculations to determine the sample size and a random participant selection). Other possibilities include employing different data collection techniques (such as surveys), even using the same technique but with other instruments (those allowing to distinguish between the different disabilities, inequalities and disorders). Finally, other approaches (such as the qualitative or mixed ones) and their related techniques (for example, interviews and ethnographic observation) could also be beneficial in the effort to overcome the abovementioned difficulties.

Similarly, in order to identify a more realistic pattern for teachers, future research should analyse the relationship between the teaching professionals' attitudes and their actual behaviour.

6. Conclusions

Inclusive education calls for motivation and teachers' willingness towards effective care of children with special educational needs. Consequently, the attitudinal element can be considered as a prerequisite to successful care of diversity. In short, two opposing attitudes can be identified in the face of people with disabilities, especially for those with ID [6]: (a) a positive attitude towards this group of people, conveyed in the belief that they can participate as full members in community life, and (b) a negative attitude concerning the prejudice, in attitudinal terms, on the affective and cognitive dimensions. This negative perspective also involves discrimination, in terms of the behavioural dimension.

Teachers' unfavourable beliefs on inclusive education could become one of the most harmful factors towards the development of inclusive practices [36], as they can contribute to the expansion of negative ideas related to the integration of these students into normalised educational contexts. This occurs because they assume that students with disabilities will not benefit to a larger extent in regular schools than in Special education classes [35].

Considering the data resulting from this study, it can be assumed that working teachers possess an acceptable attitude (although with room for improvement) towards integration of students. The socio-demographic variables, which could condition the teachers' attitudinal profile, have been taken into consideration for this study. However, they did not prove to be determining, in general terms. It is supposed that the better, and more positive, information teachers receive about disabilities, in general, and ID, in particular, the less negative attitudes and beliefs will be registered [33]. As Morin et al. point out [6], getting to know the causes for ID may allow for a better understanding of the differences concerning these people.

Accordingly, it would be advisable to encourage a higher quality interaction between the most vulnerable people and teachers in general. This could become a way to mitigate the hostility that some adults could display towards the integration of these individuals.

It has been proved that a higher knowledge of ID is associated with less stigmatising attitudes [37].

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