

# A Comparative Study of Teachers' Attitudes Towards Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs in Kindergarten Classroom According to Their Age and Years of Teaching Experience in Private Schools in Bangkok

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## Abstract

This study is conducted for the purpose in determination whether a significant difference in teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of student with special educational needs according to their age and years of teaching experience in private schools in Bangkok. The study was carried out in the year 2021 to 2022. A carefully selected sample of 50 kindergarten teachers from private schools of Bangkok participated in this study. The questionnaire was physically distributed to 50 teachers in private schools in Bangkok. A quantitative inferential statistic (One-Way ANOVA) was chosen to compare the three research variables addressed in this study. The Questionnaire was done by Tsakiridou and Polyzopoulou (2014) the study of Greek Teachers' Attitudes toward the Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs was adopted and used to measure the levels of teachers' attitude towards inclusion of students with special educational need. The data was collected from teachers in private schools of Bangkok. From the data analyzed it was found that the overall level of teachers' attitude towards inclusion of students with special educational need according to their age and years of teaching experience was moderate. The study concluded that there is no significant difference between kindergarten teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with special education needs in kindergarten classrooms in accordance with their age and years of teaching experience in private schools in Bangkok. Recommendations are provided for teachers, administrators, parents and future researchers based on the analysis of this study.

*Keywords:* Teachers' Attitudes, Inclusion of Students, Age, Years of Teaching Experience, Private Schools, Bangkok

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## 1. Introduction

According to the World Health Organization, approximately over one billion people in the world have at least some kind of disabilities and are facing so many challenges to receive the best education (Boivin, 2018). Therefore, it is important to improve and provide the disabled children with better education. Abundant amounts of research have been conducted on the attitudes of teachers towards the inclusion of students with special educational needs in various nations mainly in primary and secondary school teachers.

In Thailand (Walsh, 2017; Gaines, 2017; Konza, 2008; Saldaña and Moreno, 2012). Teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with special educational needs is very important. This is especially true for younger learners. (Sucuoğlu, Bakkaloğlu, Fadime, Seyda and Selma, 2013). Moreover, young learners both with and without disabilities, benefit from inclusive settings with their social relationship. In addition, when typical learners have a chance to work with disabled learners, the typical children develop a sense of sensitivity and positive attitudes towards others.

The international legislation in various countries, mainly in Europe supports inclusive education for children with special needs (SN). They focus on enlisting special needs children by educating them together with normal students in regular schools, rather than having special class or school for them. The idea behind implementation of inclusive education differs drastically, this is also based on nation's culture and acceptance. As per Lindsay (2003) study, inclusion of children rests on two factors of whether it is right to include special needs children in regular school and whether inclusive education is more beneficial for a special need child than segregated education.

Loreman et al (2011) and Kozleski et al. (2011) states that inclusion of children with special education needs in their early age is vital as it is not only important for the SEN child growth, but also celebrate importance of diversity and differences with consideration towards equal opportunity, social justice as well as encompass the role of disability.

The study focuses on schools located in Bangkok which cater to SN children. All of which work towards supporting SN children by enlisting various programs and using professional teachers. They include professional and special teachers and licensed therapists. Although these schools implement these special programs for children from young age, however there is lack of inclusion in regular school and that reduces interaction and communication with regular class setup. Special program and treatment given to the children is very beneficial, however lack of inclusion with regular students will not only hamper their development but will also result in lack of understanding within regular children on SN children.

### *1.1 Research Objective*

There are four research objectives:

- To identify the level of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with special educational needs in kindergarten classrooms according to their age in private schools in Bangkok.
- To identify the level of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with special educational needs in kindergarten classrooms according to their years of experience in private schools in Bangkok.
- To determine whether there is a significant difference between the teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with special education needs in kindergarten classrooms according to their age in private schools in Bangkok.
- To determine whether there is a significant difference between the teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with special education needs in kindergarten classrooms according to years of teaching experience in private schools in Bangkok.

### *1.2 Theoretical framework*

According to psychology, attitude is an emotion a person reacts or behave to a specific thing or person around them. Attitude can be influenced by the upbringing of a person. However, attitudes can change over time due to the external or internal factors. Furthermore, psychologists define attitude as a tool to evaluate a certain material, concept, idea, or a person (Eagly and Chacken, 1993). Attitudes tend to either be negative or positive. However,

it is possible to have a mixed evaluation. In terms of theoretical framework for this thesis, the researcher adopted the social cognitive theory and behavioral learning theory (Breckler, 1984).

### *1.3 Behavioral Learning Theory*

Behaviorism is one of the oldest and classical theory of learning (Nalliah and idris, 2014). Behaviorism is the model of 'learning as the acquisition of stimulus-response pairs' and 'believe the objective of the theory is to impart to the learner the knowledge of reality' (Doolittle, 2014 and Hickey, 2014, p.17). Behaviorism based education practice includes in an education setting that focuses on performance and behavior of the students (Ertmer and Newby, 2013). Inclusive education practice based on behaviorism have been well-known and have shown positive outcome for students with special need in classroom (Steele, 2005 and Al-Shammari, 2019). The practice that are based on this theory are systematic in their approach as teacher implement instruction followed by the students. Behaviorism based practice are widely used by teacher for SEN students (Zhang et al., 2016). This theory is relevant to the research as the researcher compared if there is any difference in teachers' age and years of teaching experience with behavioral integration and physical integration.

### *1.4 Social Cognitive Theory*

Social cognition theory as per study done by Bandura (1986 and 2012), reflect as a framework of learning which include learner cognition, behavior, personal factor as affect and social environment. Cognitivist study by Evgeniou and Loizou (2012), reflect that "during each development stage, the ability to learn and the process of learning is different" (p. 666). The cognitive approach is useful in influencing the mental activity. The inclusive education practice which is cognitivist based involves cognitivism with focus on processing mental information and interaction with student on guiding them through their learning (Ertmer and Newby, 2013). This is related to an individual beliefs and knowledge regarding a certain object, idea or a person. This component is important to this study because the researcher determined the attitude of teachers from academic integration.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1 Population and Sample*

The research site was the five private schools in Bangkok, Thailand. The target population for this research was 50 teachers at kindergarten level who were teaching at the schools in the academic year 2021 to 2022. The teachers participated in the study was both male and females from different age range and experience level.

The study employed a population sample of 50 kindergarten level teachers in private schools in Bangkok, Thailand in the academic years 2021 to 2022. The participants were 50 teachers from schools.

### *2.2 Instrument*

During the literature review, the researcher discovered a survey done by Tsakiridou and Polyzopoulou (2014) the study of Greek Teachers' Attitudes toward the Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs. The research instrument is a process with broad assumption plan and step to collect the data, analyze and evaluate it to address the research problems (Creswell, 2013). The research decided to adopt the survey questionnaire as research instrument from this study. The survey questionnaire is performed to gather the essential information

from the respondents based on the study. There are three main purposes of questionnaire to perform the study (Malhotra, 2004). Firstly, design of questionnaire is important to understand. Secondly, applying easy words in the questionnaire is crucial part of questionnaire to ensure that participants understand the question easily. Thirdly, the questionnaire must be concise and clear. Though, the survey questionnaire is categorized into two main parts. First part of questionnaire explains the demographic such as gender, age and years of teaching experience. The second part consists of question related with scale questions includes 16 questions, deigned to measure different aspects of inclusion, assessing four factors of inclusive education:

1. physical integration (the mainstreaming of students with physical disabilities),
2. Academic integration (having students with disabilities take part in a regular class curriculum)
3. Behavioral integration (the identification of appropriate range of behavior)
4. Social integration (students with and without disabilities interacting with each other as peers).

### 2.3 Validity and Reliability

The validity and reliability of questionnaire is important as the data collected need to be measured (Tsakiridou and Polyzopoulou 2014). For the validity, of the questionnaire was developed by Tsakiridou and Polyzopoulou, the questionnaire comprises of 16 items covering 4 areas of integration. The reliability coefficients of the overall scale for the questionnaire reported at  $p = .71$

## 3. Findings

The finding of this research is present in this chapter and includes the correlational analysis of the data from the homeroom teacher at private schools in Bangkok. The researcher collected the date from 10th to 30 April 2022. For each school 10 surveys are distributed; the kindergarten teachers have a 100% response rate. The collected data from the homeroom teacher is presented in two sections. The first section presents the general information of the respondents, and the second section presents the research objective. The purpose of this research is to determine the level of teachers attitudes of inclusion towards students with special educational needs in kindergarten classroom according to their age and years of teaching experiences. Moreover, it is also to determine whether there is a significance difference between teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with special educational needs in kindergarten classroom according to their age and years of teaching

### 3.1 Research Objective 1

The first objective of the research is to determine the level of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with special educational needs in kindergarten classrooms according to their age in private schools in Bangkok.

Table 1: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations to Determine the Level of Teacher's Attitude Towards Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs According to Their Years of Teaching experience in Private Schools in Bangkok

Table 1. Mean score and Standard Deviation of the Teachers' Age Group

| Age Group | Less than 25 years |     | 25 to 30 years |     | 31 to 35 years |     | 36 to 40 years |     |
|-----------|--------------------|-----|----------------|-----|----------------|-----|----------------|-----|
|           | M                  | SD  | M              | SD  | M              | SD  | M              | SD  |
| Overall   | 2.62               | .40 | 2.91           | .46 | 2.71           | .44 | 3.03           | .61 |

Table 1 present the teacher's attitude toward inclusion of students with special education needs in private schools in Bangkok. The data is collected from 50 kindergarten teachers working in 5 private schools in Bangkok. Based on the age group of less than 25 years, the overall mean is 2.62 which indicates a moderate level of attitudes towards inclusion of students with special education needs. Moreover, based on the age group of 25 to 30 years old the overall mean value is 2.91 which indicates a moderate level of attitudes towards inclusion of students with special educational needs.

The overall mean for teachers age 31 to 35 years is 2.71 which also indicates a moderate level of attitude towards inclusion of students with special educational needs. Finally, for teachers aged 36 to 40 years also has a moderate level of attitudes towards students with special educational needs as the mean value is 3.03.

Overall, the mean value for all age groups falls within the range of 2.50 to 3.49 which suggests a moderate level of attitudes towards inclusion of students with special educational needs in the 5 private schools in Bangkok.

### 3.2 Research Objective 2

The second research objective is to identify the level of teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with special educational needs in kindergarten classrooms according to their years of experience in private schools in Bangkok. Descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation are used to determine the finding of the research.

Table 2: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations to Identify the Level of Teacher's Attitude Towards Inclusion of Students According to Their Age in Private Schools in Bangkok

Table 2. Mean score and Standard Deviation of the Teachers' Years of Teaching Experience

| Years of Teaching Experience | Less than 2 years |     | 3 to 4 years |     | 5 to 6 years |     | 7 to 8 years |    |
|------------------------------|-------------------|-----|--------------|-----|--------------|-----|--------------|----|
|                              | M                 | SD  | M            | SD  | M            | SD  | M            | SD |
| Overall                      | 2.76              | .56 | 2.77         | .41 | 2.71         | .42 | 3.46         | .  |

Table 2 present the teacher's attitude toward inclusion of students with special education needs in private schools in Bangkok. The data is collected from 50 kindergarten teachers working in 5 private schools in Bangkok. Based on the overall mean value of teachers who had less than 2 years of teaching experience which is 2.76 indicates a moderate level of attitudes towards inclusion of students with special education needs. Moreover, based on the overall mean value of teachers who had 3 to 4 years of teaching experience which is 2.77 this indicates a moderate level of attitudes towards inclusion of students with special educational needs.

The overall mean for teachers with 5 to 6 years of teaching experience is 2.71 which also indicates a moderate level of attitude towards inclusion of students with special educational needs. Finally, teachers with 7 to 8 years

of teaching experience also have a moderate level of attitudes towards students with special educational needs as the mean value is 3.46.

Overall, the mean value falls within the range of 2.50 to 3.49 which suggests a moderate level of attitudes towards inclusion of students with special educational needs in the 5 private schools in Bangkok.

### 3.3 Research Objective 3

The third objective is to determine whether there is a significant difference between the teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with special education needs in kindergarten classrooms according to their age in private schools in Bangkok. ANOVA test was implemented to compare within teacher from age group of less than 25 years, 25-30 years, 31-35 years, and 36-40 years. The result of the inferential statistics is presented below in Table 3.

Table 3: One-Way ANOVA To Evaluate the Significant Difference Between Teacher's Attitude Towards Inclusion of Students with Special Education according to their Age

Table 3 One-Way ANOVA of Teachers' Age

| Less than 25 years | N  | M    | SD  | Sig  |
|--------------------|----|------|-----|------|
| 25-30 years        | 16 | 2.62 | .40 | .229 |
| 31-35 years        | 18 | 2.91 | .46 |      |
| 36-40 years        | 10 | 2.71 | .44 |      |
| Less than 25 years | 6  | 3.03 | .61 |      |

The ANOVA table represents the sig value at .229 which is bigger value than the testing value of 0.05. Therefore, it is concluded that there is no significant difference between the teachers' attitude towards inclusion of students with special education needs in kindergarten classroom according to age in private schools in Bangkok.

### 3.4 Research Objective 4

The fourth objective is to determine whether there is a significant difference between the teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with special education needs in kindergarten classrooms according to years of teaching experience in private schools in Bangkok. ANOVA test was implemented to compare within teacher according to their years of experience from less than 2 years, 3-4 years, 5-6 years, and 7-8 years. The result of the inferential statistics is presented below in Table 8.

Table 4: ANOVA Whether there is a Significance Different Between Teacher's Attitude Towards Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs according to years of teaching experience.

Table 4 One-Way ANOVA of Teachers' Years of Teaching Experience

| Years of teaching experience | N  | M    | SD   | Sig  |
|------------------------------|----|------|------|------|
| Less than 2 years            | 12 | 2.76 | .56  | .482 |
| 3 to 4 years                 | 16 | 2.77 | .411 |      |
| 5 to 6 years                 | 10 | 2.71 | .425 |      |
| 7 to 8 years                 | 12 | 3.46 | .    |      |

The sig value is .482 which is higher than the testing value of .05. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. it concludes that there is no significant difference between teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with special education needs according to years of teaching experience in private schools in Bangkok.

#### 4. Discussion

In discussion section, the scholar discusses about main variable of the study, and it will compare with outcome of this study in comparison with literature.

##### 4.1 Age

Based on the findings and inferential statistics applied to compare teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with special educational needs showed that there is not significance difference between teachers from all the four-age group in private schools in Bangkok. This result is supported by the literature highlighted in the chapter. Atkinson et al (1997) suggest that nations do not differentiate the children with special needs as the teachers and schools in the nation want the student to be part of the society without making the student feel disassociate with the people and no specific learning disabilities have removed from the normal school. Wei and Yuen's (2000) result support the finding of this research, as their research mentions that teacher has a positive attitude towards students with special educational needs, as no support is provided by the school and less supporting facilities. Also, In Thailand the funding of inclusive education is relatively new. Lesser funding is given due to economic issues (Salamanca, 1994) and many schools are funded for it but not many teachers are trained to use it in regular classes. Moreover, parents do not want their child to be in inclusive classes and demand a regular class for their child. This view is supported by the National Educational Act of 1999 which allows a disabled person who wishes to go to school can do so, as it helps guarantee the rights of all disabled children. Moreover, Zhang and Chen (2002) finding support the view of others and the findings of this research that students are accepted in the regular class and the teacher has a positive attitude towards it.

##### 4.2 Years of teaching experience

Based on the findings and inferential statistics applied to compare teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with special educational needs showed that there is not significance difference between teachers from all the four groups of years of teaching experience in private schools in Bangkok. This finding is supported by Eiserman, Shisler, and Healey (1995), as their research stated that teachers with a moderately positive attitude towards the inclusive and acceptance to help the students. At the same time, the teacher who does not practice inclusion in regular class has a negative attitude towards inclusion. The success of the regular class with special needs children depends on the teacher's ability to accept the inclusion and teach a class with a positive attitude, giving the special child sense of belongingness which is achieved by the positive attitude of the teachers towards

the inclusion (Villa et al, 1996 & Dan, 2019). Moreover, a positive attitude is not either, the teacher must know, and perceive and must reply to the student's needs positively and correctly (Jorge, Jumenez, Mateo, and Gutierrez, 2021). Broomhead's 2019 statement supports the finding of this research and suggests that the success of inclusion education depends on belief, knowledge, and teacher attitude (Florian, 2019). Therefore, the primary data and literature suggest that teacher attitudes toward inclusion are important in the deal and educating the special needs to learn in a regular class.

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