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Sentiments, Attitudes, and Concerns of the Pre-Service Teachers about inclusive education

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Abstract: Academic institutions plays a vital role in providing and promoting inclusive education for all through the real and virtual world. Flexible academic accommodation in the teaching and learning process must be visible within the instruction and environment. To determine the pre-service teachers' sentiments, attitudes, and concerns about inclusive education, the researchers in this study utilized an online survey. The study's findings demonstrated that pre-service teachers have not and are willing to advocate for people with disabilities through social media, pre-service teachers require more probation and training to address their concerns and attitudes regarding inclusive education as they also have numerous and significant views and worries towards students with disabilities. In addition, pre-service teachers exhibit anxiety and discomfort, they need more training and assistance when it comes to direct involvement with students with disabilities. Pre-service teachers need to cultivate a more inclusive attitude through targeted support, training, and practical experiences.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a drastic impact on the education system, leaving to force educational institutions to adopt emergency remote education. Altering the mode of learning has posed significant challenges for teachers and learners alike, especially those with disabilities. Hence, Regarding what to teach, how to teach it, the workload of both teachers and pupils, the classroom atmosphere, and the implications for educational equity, there is ambiguity and disagreement (Zhang, Wang, Yang & Wang, 2020). While pre-service teachers, have to face their own obstacles in their field to become effective educators, as they navigate the intricacies of supporting learners with disabilities. The perspectives and views of teachers toward inclusive education are key to all these positive outcomes (Hernandez, Hueck & Charley 2016)

Understanding the viewpoint of pre-service teachers during this formidable time is significant in elevating educational practices and providing appropriate assistance to learners with special needs. Due to their potential for having a significant effect on implementing inclusive education, pre-service and in-service teachers' concerns and attitudes toward inclusive education as well as their level of comfort interacting with students who have disabilities have recently been the subject of research (Bhatnagar & Ajay, 2014).

Therefore, pre-service teachers have to take more responsibility for giving every student, without exception, a participative and pertinent educational experience (Murdaca et al., 2018). To give pre-service teachers the chance to interact with future pupils who will need special education, it is important to gauge their concerns about inclusion. Hence, this study measured the sentiments, attitudes, and concerns of pre-service teachers toward inclusive education.

2. Methods

The present study involved a sample of 89 first-year BEED (Bachelor of Elementary Education) students from Mindanao State University-General Santos City. A quantitative research method was employed, taking guidance from the work of Tuncay and Kizilaslan (2021), with some modifications to address the sentiments, attitudes, and concerns of pre-service teachers regarding inclusive education. The researchers utilized a refined version of the SACIE-R (Sentiments, Attitudes

and Concerns about Inclusive Education Revised) as the data collection tool, following the translation conducted by Forlin et al. (2011). This adaptation aimed to provide sufficient evidence to support the scale's reliability and validity in assessing changes in pre-service teachers' dispositions towards inclusion, their feelings about interactions with people who have disabilities, their views on accepting diverse students in mainstream classrooms, and their concerns about implementing inclusive practices.

The data collection tool consisted of 15 items, focusing on the three psychometric constructs identified in the development of the SACIE scale: sentiments (5 questions), attitudes (5 questions), and concerns (5 questions). Participants were required to respond on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = More or Less Agree, 4 = Undecided, 5 = More Less Disagree, 6= Disagree, and 7 = Strongly Disagree), allowing for quantification of their responses. Convenience sampling methods were employed to recruit participants for the study. Inclusion criteria required participants to be actively enrolled at the time of data collection, without any illnesses that would hinder their independent completion of the questionnaire, and to willingly participate in the study. The utilization of the SACIE-R scale yielded valuable insights into the sentiments, attitudes, and concerns of pre-service teachers regarding inclusive education, providing a foundation for future pedagogical strategies and curriculum development in this field.

2.1. Respond

Figure 1: Section of the respondents

Figure 2: Demographic Profile
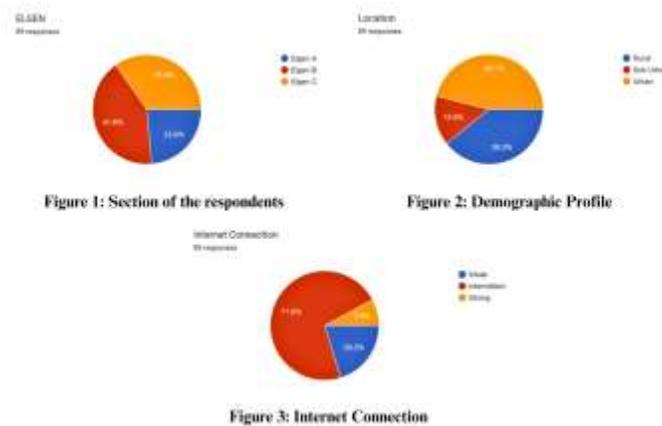
Figure 3: Internet Connection

Figure 1 presents the students' basic profiles of their sentiments, attitudes, and concerns about inclusive education, specifically categorized by their section. The data revealed that the majority of the respondents came from urban areas, providing valuable insights into the overall composition of the study sample (Figure 2). Furthermore, Figure 3 revealed that a significant portion of the respondents reported having an intermittent internet connection, thereby highlighting the potential challenges and limitations they may face when accessing online resources and participating in digital activities related to the research topic. The respondents are of mixed ethnicity and their ages range from 18 to 22 years old.

These findings significantly contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the students' profiles and shed light on important factors within the research context. The data regarding the respondents' residential locations allows for a nuanced analysis of their experiences and perspectives, considering the potential influence of urban environments on their sentiments, attitudes, and concerns toward inclusive education. Additionally, the prevalence of intermittent internet connections among pre-service teachers provides valuable insights into the potential barriers they may encounter in accessing and engaging with digital resources, which is crucial to the study's focus on online learning and inclusive practices.

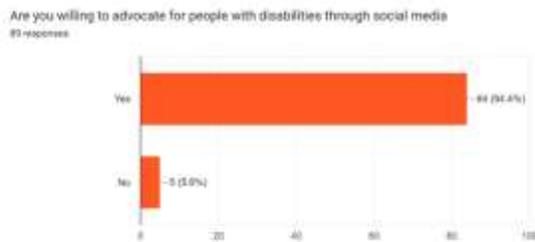## 2.2. Willingness to advocate for people with disability

Figure 4: Willingness to advocate for people with disabilities through social media
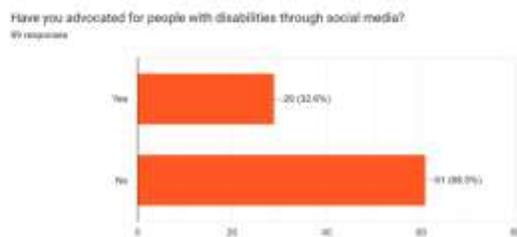

Figure 5: Advocated for people with disabilities through social media

Figure 4 provided insights into the respondents' willingness to advocate for people with disabilities through social media platforms. The data revealed a substantial majority of respondents expressing their readiness to engage in such advocacy efforts. Conversely, a smaller proportion of respondents indicate a lack of willingness to participate in advocating for people with disabilities through social media. This finding emphasized the potential for social media platforms to serve as powerful tools for promoting disability rights and raising awareness.

Furthermore, Figure 5 highlighted that the majority of respondents have not yet actively advocated for people with disabilities through social media, while a smaller subset of respondents has already engaged in such advocacy activities. These findings indicated both untapped potential and existing involvement in social media advocacy for individuals with disabilities.

3. Findings and Discussion

Table 1: Sentiments of Students towards inclusive education.

Statements	SA	A	MA/ LA	U	MD/ LD	D	SD	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I find it difficult to overcome my initial shock when meeting people with severe physical disabilities.	5 (5.62 %)	8 (8.99 %)	20 (22.4 7%)	11 (12.3 6%)	10 (11.2 4%)	20 (22.4 7%)	15 (16.8 5%)	3.61	2.41	Low
2. I am afraid to look a person with a disability straight in the face.	6 (6.74 %)	6 (6.74 %)	12 (13.4 8%)	4 (4.49 %)	8 (8.99 %)	17 (19.1 %)	36 (40.4 5%)	2.78	3.34	Average
3. I tend to make contact with people with disabilities briefly and I finish them as quickly as	2 (2.25 %)	9 (10.1 1%)	15 (16.8 5%)	12 (13.4 8%)	13 (14.6 1%)	21 (23.6 %)	17 (19.1 %)	3.24	2.46	Low
4. I would feel terrible if I had a disability.	18 (20.2 2%)	17 (19.1 %)	15 (16.8 5%)	24 (26.9 7%)	6 (6.74 %)	2 (2.25 %)	7 (7.87 %)	4.8	2.8	Low
5. I dread the thought that I could eventually end up with a disability.	11 (12.3 6%)	20 (22.4 7%)	17 (19.1 %)	23 (25.8 4%)	5 (5.62 %)	7 (8.87 %)	6 (6.74 %)	4.59	1.67	Very Low
Average Mean	8.4 %	12 %	15.8 %	14.2 %	8.4 %	13.4 %	16.2 %	3.80	2.53	Low

Table 2: Attitudes of Students towards inclusive education.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
6. Students who have difficulty expressing their thoughts verbally should be in regular	13 (14.61%)	22 (24.72%)	20 (22.47%)	15 (16.85%)	9 (10.11%)	7 (7.87%)	3 (3.37)	6.55	2.62	Average
7. Students who frequently fail exams should be in regular classes.	20 (22.47%)	17 (19.1%)	18 (20.22%)	17 (19.1%)	8 (8.99%)	5 (5.62%)	4 (4.49%)	4.92	2.6	Low
8. Students who need an individualized academic program should be in regular	12 (13.48%)	18 (20.22%)	21 (23.6%)	12 (13.48%)	12 (13.48%)	12 (13.48%)	2 (2.25%)	4.43	2.44	Low
9. Students who are inattentive should be in regular classes.	12 (13.48%)	19 (21.35%)	13 (14.61%)	16 (17.98%)	17 (19.1%)	8 (8.99%)	4 (4.49%)	4.33	2.29	Low
10. Students who require communicative technologies (for example Braille and sign language) should be in regular.	9 (10.11%)	14 (23.8%)	16 (17.98%)	19 (21.35%)	16 (17.98%)	11 (12.36%)	4 (4.49%)	4.23	2.25	Low
Average Mean	13.2 %	18 %	17.6 %	15.8 %	12.4 %	8.6 %	3.4 %	4.89	2.44	Low

Table 3: Concerns of Students towards inclusive education.

11. I am concerned that my workload will increase if I have students with disabilities in my	6 (6.74%)	6 (6.74%)	16 (17.98%)	16 (17.98%)	20 (22.47%)	13 (14.61%)	12 (13.48%)	3.59	2.29	Low
12. I am concerned that it will be difficult to give appropriate attention to all students in an	5 (5.62%)	11 (12.36%	28 (31.46)	16 (17.98%)	15 (16.85%)	11 (12.36%)	3 (3.3)	4.21	2.87	Average
13. I am concerned that I will be more stressed if I have students with disabilities in my class.	4 (4.49%)	4 (4.49%)	14 (23.86)	17 (19.1%)	21 (23.6%)	14 (23.86)	15 (16.85%)	3.32	2.53	Low
14. I am concerned that students with disabilities will not be accepted by the rest of the class.	17 (19.1%)	25 (28.09%)	20 (22.47%)	8 (8.99%)	6 (6.74%	5 (5.62%)	8 (8.99%)	4.96	2.80	Average
15. I am concerned that I do not have the knowledge and skills required to teach students with disabilities.	17 (19.1%)	17 (19.1%)	18 (20.22%)	17 (19.1%)	9 (10.11%)	7 (7.87%)	4 (4.49%)	4.76	2.41	Low
Average Mean	9.8 %	12.6 %	19.2 %	14.8 %	14.2 %	10 &	8.4 %	4.16	2.58	Low

Legend: 1= Strong Agree; 2= Agree; 3= More or Less Agree; 4= Undecided; 5= More or Less Disagree; 6= Disagree; 7= Strongly Disagree

In this study, the sentiments, attitudes, and concerns of pre-service teachers toward inclusive education were analyzed. Based on the results, it is indicated that more probation and training are required in order to address the pre-service teachers' concerns and attitudes about inclusive education. The current situation demonstrates that academia's duty extends beyond the classroom to support social development and assist members of the community in the midst of the pandemic (Toquero, 2021). By offering the appropriate support and education, it is feasible to create a more inclusive mindset, which will ultimately benefit students with disabilities and promote more accessible learning environments. All children in their local communities must be able to receive an education from mainstream institutions (Meijer & Watkins, 2019; Opertti, Walker & Zhang, 2014).

It was drawn from the study's findings about pre-service teachers' views and worries about inclusive education and students with disabilities are numerous and significant. Pre-service teachers exhibited anxiety or discomfort when it came to direct involvement with people with disabilities, and a significant number of them demonstrated a need for further assistance or training. Additionally, they displayed unfavorable or disagreeable attitudes after brief interactions with those who had disabilities, demonstrating a lack of understanding, discomfort, or inadequate prior interaction with those who had disabilities. With this, during their school practicum, pre-service teachers should have greater chances to contact and instruct students with disabilities. Additionally, they need extra instruction and information about the educational regulations that affected these children (AlMahdi & Bukama, 2019). Due to their own anxieties and worries, this perspective

may have an impact on how they approach working with children who have disabilities, which may have repercussions on their attitudes and perceptions of inclusive education. Only a small portion of children with special needs received educational support during the COVID-19 pandemic process, or none at all (Kritzer & Smith, 2020; Weale, 2020). It is vitally important to give future teachers the opportunity to work with students who need special education. In both pre-service and in-service training activities, educational programs for teachers to gain knowledge, teaching abilities, and practical experience with regard to inclusive education can increase teachers' self-confidence and encourage their favorable sentiments, attitudes, and concerns about the subject (Tuncay & Kizilaslan, 2021).

The survey also found that pre-service teachers had a range of perspectives on including children with different special needs in regular classes. Not all aspiring teachers felt confident in their knowledge and skills when it comes to teaching pupils who had these kinds of difficulties (AlMahdi & Bukama, 2019). Additionally, the conclusions dispelled concerns that pre-service teachers had about how inclusive education would effect their workload. Some participants were apprehensive about conceivable demands in the future. Special education teachers may feel less prepared to fulfill the particular needs of these students when comparing a general education teaching license to one that is concentrated mainly on students with disabilities (Agran et al., 2002). Some pre-service teachers who answered the survey claimed it was difficult to concentrate on the diverse needs of children in inclusive education, but others claimed they were either optimistic or unsure about the results. Teaching in inclusive classrooms, which requires catering to individual needs in a variety of learning groups, maybe even more difficult for pre-service teachers than teaching in general (Weber & Greiner, 2019). However, some pre-service teachers believed that pupils who struggle in verbal communication should be in regular classes, while others favored inclusive education and recognized the importance of providing specialized academic programs to those students who need them. Teachers may place children in more restrictive learning environments because they mistakenly believe that special education students must be enrolled in such a setting in order to receive the "specialized" services from which they can benefit (Ruppar et al., 2016). Additionally, teachers who are unfamiliar with inclusive general education class settings may not recognize its benefits for students with disabilities (Agran, Alper & Wehmeyer, 2002).

4. Conclusion

The findings of the study emphasize the importance of addressing pre-service teachers' concerns, attitudes, and lack of understanding regarding inclusive education. The results indicate a need for targeted support, training, and practical experience to cultivate a more inclusive attitude among future educators. By providing pre-service teachers with opportunities to interact with and instruct students with disabilities during their training, as well as educating them about relevant policies and teaching strategies, we can enhance their confidence and foster positive sentiments towards inclusive education.

The survey demonstrates that pre-service teachers have a range of perspectives on including children with dissabilities in regular classrooms. While some teachers were uneasy or lacked the confidence to deal with children with different needs, others understood the value of tailored academic plans and the advantages of inclusive education. Pre-service teachers can traverse the difficulties of inclusive classrooms and develop inclusive learning environments that accommodate the various needs of all students by addressing these worries and offering thorough training.

This study emphasizes the need of supporting inclusive education by providing pre-service teachers with the knowledge, skills, and supportive settings required for successful inclusion. By addressing concerns, offering customized training, and promoting positive attitudes, we can ensure that all students—including those with disabilities—receive an inclusive education that enables them to develop and fulfill their full potential.

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