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REGULATORY EFFECT OF GENDER AND EDUCATION DEPARTMENT STATUS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AWARENESS AND SELF-EFFICACY

Research article

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Abstract

Inclusive education is based on the idea that all individuals—regardless of individual characteristics and differences—should have access to education, a fundamental right granted to all. This study examines the relationship between pre-service teachers' inclusive education awareness and self-efficacy and the impact of different variables that may affect this relationship. For this purpose, the Awareness Scale for Inclusive Education and the Teachers' Self-Efficacy Perception of Inclusive Education Scale were used as data collection tools. The study was conducted through a correlational survey design to understand the relationship between pre-service teachers' Awareness of Inclusive Education scores and Teacher's Self-Efficacy Perception of Inclusive Education scores and determine the regulatory effect of gender and the departments in which the teachers studied on this relationship. The study sample included 360 pre-service teachers who completed the Special Education and Inclusion course. Data were analyzed using SPSS 24.0 and the Process Macro plugin. The results show a significant relationship between pre-service teachers' awareness of inclusive education and self-efficacy perceptions. Results also indicate that while the regulatory effect of gender on the relationship between pre-service teachers' inclusive education awareness and self-efficacy perceptions was not significant, the regulatory effect of the department they belonged to was substantial.

Keywords: Inclusion, Awareness, Self-efficacy, Regulatory Effect

1. Introduction

Inclusive education has been discussed frequently worldwide, especially in recent years. It has also been a discussion topic included in the framework of educational theories that aim to provide for the transforming needs of individuals and groups who have different characteristics compared to their peers (e.g., immigrants and individuals with disabilities) and include them in society (Terzi, 2014; Savolainen et al., 2012; Ferguson, 2002). This idea is based on the belief that all individuals, regardless of individual characteristics and differences, should be provided with the fundamental right to education in schools [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2001]. In line with this, the idea of inclusiveness in education entails an individual-focused perspective that considers an individual's every need, provides family participation when necessary, and accepts individual differences while creating educational programs developed with a philosophy of "education for all." (Baykara Pehlivan & Baykara Acar, 2009) This perspective also necessitates a



dynamic process that includes changes in educational policies, school culture, school administrators, and teachers to provide quality education to all students according to their needs (Artiles et al., 2006). In this context, due to both the specific “inclusive” characteristics of inclusive education and its widespread discussion in education theory, it is important to understand the starting point of inclusive education, which aims to help individuals with different characteristics than their peers adapt to social and educational life.

During the 1940s, special segregated schools began providing education services to better meet the needs of students with special needs. Until the 1960s, the quality of services had focused on individual needs provided in special segregated education schools under the guidance of specialists, and this policy was not questioned. However, in the 1960s, when human rights were more widely discussed, this situation led to negative consequences, such as the belittling and labeling of individuals who received schooling in special education institutions and the limitations imposed on their educational programs. In the following years, due to the increasing negative criticism of segregated educational environments, discussions on how to correct this problem increased. As a result, alternative suggestions for effective education of individuals with special needs were developed (Graham & Jahnukainen, 2011; Porter & Richler, 2011; Thomas et al., 1998). These alternative suggestions have led to a new practice called “mainstreaming.” Mainstreaming is defined as providing those who need special education with schooling in the same environments as their peers, along with supportive educational services [Ministry of National Education of Turkey (MEB), 2013].

Mainstreaming education has undergone changes in the 1980s and transformed into the concept of inclusive education (Gürgür, 2019).

Inclusive education is a multi-faceted concept that ensures that all children are educated well and receive education with their peers in schools they have chosen (Aktekin, 2017; [United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF)], 2017; UNESCO, 2009; Idol, 2006); inclusive education also means accepting differences and diversity and conforming to human rights, social justice, and equality (Imaniah & Fitria, 2018; Loreman et al., 2014; Forlin, 2012; Graham & Jahnukainen, 2011). In this context, educational inclusivity is based on the idea that all students should be equally valued. This idea aims to end the exclusion of students from societal, cultural, or educational programs by including all students in education through schools. Inclusivity also aims to increase cultural diversity in schools and restructure general practices to respond to the characteristic differences of students. Additionally, it strives to reduce obstacles related to receiving an education by ensuring the participation of those who need special education and all students. Inclusive education also ensures the improvement of schools for staff and students, increases success, and maintains the continuity of the relationship between schools and communities (UNESCO, 2020; UNICEF, 2017; UNESCO, 2017).

School and school administrations play an essential role in increasing the quality of education provided through inclusive education. However, its implementation in schools necessitates careful consideration of the readiness of schools and changes in administrative methods. The inclusivity of educational programs, the creation of the infrastructure needed for inclusivity, and the enhancement of teacher motivation necessary for creating an inclusive school system can only be achieved with effective administration. In addition, school administrations should also take responsibility for overcoming the difficulties that students may encounter during educational processes and develop necessary strategies to solve these problems (Chios, 2021). Implementing an inclusive school approach is only possible with an inclusive school culture. Therefore, inclusive schools should consider the differences between

students and try to recognize and understand the social reactions to these differences. In this context, creating “diversity cultures” in schools can ensure that all students are included in the educational process (Carrington, 1999; Turner & Louis, 1996). Through this inclusivity, the cultural values of students belonging to different ethnic segments of society become the center of intercultural exchange through schools. This dynamic enables a multicultural setting and structure. Intercultural exchange plays a significant role in revealing the power of inclusive education, and teachers are an important stakeholder in realizing this transformation.

As the primary organizers of the inclusive education process, teachers must carefully structure classroom environments and the interactions that will take place in these environments so that students feel that the classes they attend encourage their education; the students also need to internalize their classrooms (Yılmaz et al., 2012). In inclusive education, teachers should adapt the curriculum according to special requirements to ensure that all students can participate in education and training. These adaptations should consider the individual and developmental characteristics of each student and the physical conditions of the school (Imaniah & Fitria, 2018; Naraian, 2017; Kargin, 2007). Teachers should also provide a stimulating learning environment and opportunities for students to learn effectively. To provide these opportunities, teachers need to have a certain degree of professional and personal competence. Therefore, to structure future practices to be more inclusive, teachers should be trained according to these competencies (Mag et al., 2017; Bukvić, 2014). To train and prepare them, elucidating the pre-service education of these prospective teachers is needed. In this context, it is also important to raise pre-service teachers’ inclusive education awareness and improve their inclusive education self-efficacy to provide quality and universal inclusive education. Therefore, this study examines the relationship between pre-service teachers’ inclusive education awareness and self-efficacy and the regulatory effect of different variables on this relationship. For this purpose, the following questions were investigated:

1. Is there a significant relationship between pre-service teachers’ Awareness of Inclusive Education scores and Teacher’s Self-Efficacy Perception of Inclusive Education scores?

2. Do the following factors play a regulatory role on the effect of pre-service teachers’ Awareness of Inclusive Education scores on Teacher’s Self-Efficacy Perception of Inclusive Education scores:

- a. Gender
- b. Department of education attended

2.1. Study Design

The study was conducted through a correlational survey design to understand the relationship between pre-service teachers’ Awareness of Inclusive Education scores and Teacher’s Self-Efficacy Perception of Inclusive Education scores and determine the regulatory effect of gender and the departments in which the teachers studied on this relationship. The survey design enables a study conducted on a sample selected from a specific universe to quantitatively or numerically describe trends, attitudes, or opinions present in this universe (Creswell, 2016). Correlational survey design, on the other hand, is a design used in studies that examine a relationship between two or more variables without interfering with said variables (Büyüköztürk et al., 2012). In this study, the study design presented in Figure 1



was used to understand the relationship between pre-service teachers' Awareness of Inclusive Education scores and Teacher's Self-Efficacy Perception of Inclusive Education scores and determine the regulatory effect of gender and the departments in which the teachers studied on this relationship.

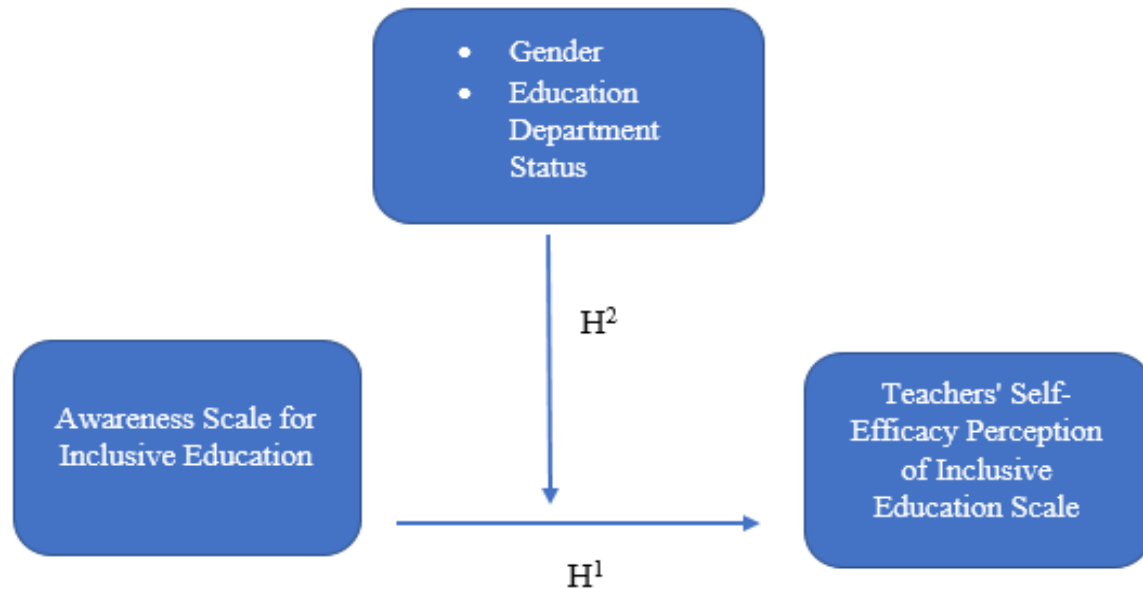


Figure 1. Study design.

2.2. Universe sample

The study universe consisted of 1,753 pre-service teachers studying at Bayburt University's Faculty of Education. The participants were selected through criterion sampling, a non-random sampling method. In this method, a study only includes individuals, events, objects, or situations with specific qualifications. In addition, the 1,753 teacher candidates in the universe of the study were represented by 360 pre-service teachers, which was a sufficient sample size calculated with a .05 confidence interval (Büyüköztürk et al., 2012). The inclusion criterion for the participants was completing the Special Education and Inclusion course. The reason for this criterion is to examine the students who would have knowledge and awareness about inclusive education within the scope of the course. Demographic information about the sample group participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Demographic information of the participants.*

<i>Education program (Department)</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total</i>
Classroom training	Female	51	80	64
	Male	13	20	
Turkish education	Female	34	68	50
	Male	16	32	
Primary school Mathematics education	Female	24	57	42
	Male	18	43	
English language education	Female	16	84	19
	Male	3	16	
Guidance and psychological counseling	Female	46	65	71
	Male	25	35	
Social studies education	Female	87	77	113
	Male	26	23	
			Total	360

When the gender and department status distribution of the teacher candidates in the study in Table 1 is examined, it can be observed that 258 (72%) of the 360 participants are female and 102 (28%) are male. Of these participants, 64 (17.7%) were studying in the classroom training program, 50 (13.8%) in the Turkish education program, 42 (11.6%) in the primary school mathematics education program, 19 (5.27%) in the English language education program, 71 (19.7%) in the guidance and psychological counseling program, and 113 (31.4%) in the social sciences education program.

2.3. Data collection tools

In the collection of data, the Awareness Scale for Inclusive Education, developed by Kılcan and Şimşek (2021), the Teachers' Self-Efficacy Perception of Inclusive Education Scale, developed by Şimşek (2009), and a Personal Information Form, which the authors of this study prepared to determine information about the participants, were used. The Awareness Scale for Inclusive Education used in the study is a 5-point Likert-type scale consisting of 30 items. The scale comprises five sub-dimensions: Purpose of Inclusive Education, Inclusive Education for Disadvantaged Groups, Inclusive Education and Legislation, Success in Inclusive Education, and Origin of Inclusive Education. The reliability coefficient of the scale (Cronbach's alpha) is 0.88 (Kılcan & Şimşek, 2021). The Teachers' Self-Efficacy Perception of Inclusive Education Scale is a 5-point Likert-type scale comprising 27 items with a 3-factor structure. These factors are The Importance of Proper Planning in Inclusive Education, The Necessity of Taking Responsibility in Inclusive Education, and Anxiety of Personal Competence in Inclusive Education. The reliability coefficient of this scale (Cronbach's alpha) was calculated as 0.89 (Şimşek, 2019).

2.4. Validity and reliability

As a result of the analysis, the reliability coefficient of the Awareness Scale for Inclusive Education was found to be .88. The reliability coefficient of the Teachers' Self-Efficacy Perception of Inclusive Education was .82. The Cronbach Alpha values of both scales being above .80 indicates that the reliability of the scales was high (Seçer, 2015; Kayış, 2010).

2.5. Data analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS 24.0 and the Process Macro plugin. The reliability coefficients of the data were evaluated. Correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships between the variables within the scope of the study, and regression analysis was performed using the SPSS Process Macro plugin to test the hypotheses of regulation.

2.4. Ethical Consent of the Research

Bayburt University Ethics Committee approved that the research was ethically convenient. (Bayburt University Ethics Committee/Protocol NO. E-79126184-050.99-46496 Date: 22.12.2021).

Ethics committee consent information

Name of the committee that made the ethical evaluation: Bayburt University Ethics Committee

Date of ethical evaluation decision: 22.12.2021

As a result of the meeting numbered 2021/196 in the ethics evaluation document, it was decided that "There is no objection to the feasibility of the Research/Project in terms of scientific research ethics".

3. Findings and Comments

3.1. Findings Regarding the First Sub-Problem

The Relationships Between Awareness of Inclusive Education Scores and Teacher's Self-Efficacy Perception of Inclusive Education Scores

The relationships between pre-service teachers' Awareness of Inclusive Education scores and Teacher's Self-Efficacy Perception of Inclusive Education scores are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Correlation coefficients between variables.*

	Simple correlation		Descriptive statistics		
	1	2	<i>n</i>	\bar{X}	<i>S</i>
1 Awareness of inclusive education	-		360	4.20	.46
2 Teacher's self-efficacy perception of inclusive education	.48**	-	360	3.84	.38

When Table 2 is examined, it is clear that there is a significant positive relationship between awareness of inclusive education scores and teacher's self-efficacy perception of inclusive education scores ($r = .48$, $p < .01$). In addition, when descriptive statistics related to variables are considered, it can be stated that the average awareness of inclusive education score ($= 4.20$) and the average teacher's self-efficacy perception of inclusive education score ($= 3.84$) are adequate.

3.2. Findings Regarding the Second Sub-Problem

The Regulatory Effect of Gender on the Effect of Awareness of Inclusive Education Scores on Teacher's Self-Efficacy Perception of Inclusive Education Scores

Findings related to the regulatory effect of gender on awareness of inclusive education scores and teachers' self-efficacy perception of inclusive education scores are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Findings related to the regulation model of the gender variable.

Variables	→ Teacher's self-efficacy perception of inclusive education (Y)			
	β	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Awareness of inclusive education (X)	.44***	.49	.14	.75
Gender (W)	.15	.35	-.75	1.05
R^2	.23			
Regulatory index				
	β	SE	LLCI	ULCI
X.W	-.03	.08	-.25	.18

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; $n = 360$; LLCI = lower limit confidence interval; ULCI = upper limit confidence interval. Bootstrap resampling = 5000. The reported beta coefficients (β) were non-standardized.

According to Table 3, the regulatory role of gender in awareness of inclusive education scores and teachers' self-efficacy perception of inclusive education scores is not significant ($b = -.03$, CI [-.25, -.18]).

The Regulatory Effect of the Education Department on Awareness of Inclusive Education Scores and Teacher's Self-Efficacy Perception of Inclusive Education Scores

Findings related to the regulatory effect of the education department on awareness of inclusive education scores and teachers' self-efficacy perception of inclusive education scores are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Findings related to the regulation model of the education department variable

Variables		→ Teacher's self-efficacy perception of inclusive education (Y)			
		β	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Awareness of inclusive education (X)		.62***	.12	.28	.95
Department(W)****	A-B	.38	.66	-1.33	2.09
	A-C	.30	.74	-1.62	2.24
	A-D	3.16*	1.24	-.05	6.37
	A-E	.75	.68	-1.01	2.52
	A-F	1.63*	.63	-.01	3.28
R^2		.54			
Effect of X on Y according to the department variable					
		β	SE	LLCI	ULCI
(A) Classroom training		.61***	.12	.28	.94
(B) Turkish education		.55***	.07	.35	.75
(C) Primary school mathematics education		.59***	.12	.28	.90
(D) English language education		-.13	.25	-.78	.53
(E) Guidance and psychological counseling		.43***	.09	.20	.67
(F) Social studies education		.23***	.06	.05	.40
Regulatory index					
		β	SE	LLCI	ULCI
X.W (Interaction)	X*A-B	-.06	.15	-.45	.33
	X*A-C	-.02	.17	-.47	.43
	X*A-D	-.74**	.28	-1.47	-.00
	X*A-E	-.17	.15	-.58	.23
	X*A-F	-.38**	.14	-.76	-.01

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; **** indicator matrix was applied, $n = 360$; LLCI = lower limit confidence interval; ULCI = upper limit confidence interval. Bootstrap resampling = 5000. The reported beta coefficients (β) were non-standardized.

According to Table 4, the effect of awareness of inclusive education scores (X) on teacher's self-efficacy perception of inclusive education scores (Y) was significant in terms of every education department in which the participants studied except English language education ($b = -.13$, CI [-.78, .53]). In addition, the effect of awareness of inclusive education scores on teacher's self-efficacy perception of inclusive education scores was most significant for those in the classroom training department ($b = .61$, CI [.28, .94]) and least significant for students in the social studies education department ($b = .23$, CI [.05, .40]). An indicator matrix was used to determine whether the change in the effect of X on Y is significant according to a specific department. The A category (classroom training), where the most significant effect was found, was compared with all other categories, and the significance of the difference between the regression values was examined. There was no statistically significant difference between the regression values for category A and categories B, C, and E ($b = -.06$, CI [-.45, .33] for A-B; $b = -.02$, CI [-.47, .43] for A-C; $b = -.17$, CI [-.58, .23] for A-E). However, a statistically significant difference was found between the regression values for categories A and D ($b = -.74$, CI [-1.47, -.00]) and for categories A and F ($b = -.38$, CI [-.76, -.01]). In sum, the effect of awareness of inclusive education scores on teachers' self-efficacy perception of inclusive education scores was different for every department the participants studied in. While the mentioned relationship was most significant in the classroom training

department (A), it was statistically less significant in the English language education (D) and social studies education (F) departments. Therefore, it can be understood that the regulatory effect of the education department on awareness of inclusive education scores and teachers' self-efficacy perception of inclusive education scores is significant.

4. Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

As a result of the findings obtained in this study, it was found that pre-service teachers who participated in the study have a high level of awareness and self-efficacy perceptions of inclusive education. In addition, a significant relationship was found between pre-service teachers' awareness of inclusive education and their self-efficacy perceptions of inclusive education. In parallel to the findings here, in a study conducted with preschool and classroom teachers, the authors found that teachers had a high level of inclusive education self-efficacy (Büyüktaşkapu et al., 2022). In a study of social studies teachers conducted by Bayram and Öztürk (2021), the authors found that most participants had high self-efficacy perceptions in meeting the needs of disadvantaged groups. The high self-efficacy of teachers regarding inclusive education is a factor that affects the quality of the learning-teaching process. Thus, to provide adequate education to different student groups, qualified teachers with this knowledge should be trained to promote student success (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Teachers' self-efficacy of inclusive education can lead to better professional learning experiences, more relevant training, and, in the end, improve students' social and cultural abilities (Choi & Lee, 2020). Therefore, pre-service teachers with high awareness and self-efficacy perceptions of inclusive education contribute to students' overall academic and social development.

It was found that while the regulatory effect of gender on the relationship between pre-service teachers' inclusive education awareness and self-efficacy perceptions was not significant, the regulatory effect of the teachers' department teachers on the same relationship was significant. When findings related to this conclusion are examined in detail, it can be observed that the effect of awareness of inclusive education scores on teachers' self-efficacy perception of inclusive education scores was most significant in the classroom trainingclassroom-training department and least significant in the social studies education department. No statistically significant difference was found between the regression values for the classroom trainingclassroom-training department, Turkish education department, primary school mathematics education department, and guidance and psychological counseling department. However, there was a statistically significant difference between the regression values for the English language and social studies education departments. In this context, the finding showing that the effect of awareness of inclusive education scores on teachers' self-efficacy perception of inclusive education scores is low for participants in the English language education department and social studies education department is of significance. This finding may be because although pre-service teachers are aware of inclusive education, they do not consider themselves sufficiently knowledgeable about or trained in inclusive education practices. It is thought that this finding should be evaluated regarding the development characteristics of the student population served by these pre-service teachers and the different dynamics of teacher training curricula. It should also be considered that the teacher-training curricula in social fields should include more multicultural education courses than science and mathematics teacher-training curricula (YÖK, 2019). In a study with similar findings to the present one, Siwatu (2007), in the context of culturally sensitive education, maintained that pre-service teachers believed in the positive results of culturally sensitive

education but doubted their abilities to carry out practices related to the pedagogical approach to teaching.

In the literature review, it was observed that various studies about the attitudes (Yada & Savolainen, 2017; Sharma et al., 2017), awareness (Sirem & Çatal, 2022; Sudha & Indu, 2015; Kafia, 2014; Lancaster & Bain, 2010), and self-efficacy (Woodcock et al., 2022; Wray et al., 2022; Alnahdi, 2020; Loreman et al., 2013; Woodcock et al., 2012; Savolainen et al., 2012) of teachers and prospective teachers related to inclusive education existed. However, no studies aiming to explain the regulatory effect of gender and education department on the relationship between pre-service teachers' inclusive education awareness and self-efficacy perceptions—the primary purpose of the present research—were found in the literature. Thus, this study is unique in its value to the existing literature and can lead to future studies on inclusive education.

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