



Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in General Education (The Case of Schools in the City of Luena)

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Citation: Herman Messias Alberto Miji (2026) *Teacher's Attitudes Towards the Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in General Education (The Case of Schools in the City of Luena)*. *J of Eco and Soc Dynamics*. 2(5), 1-12. WMJ/JESD-151

Summary

This essay focuses on the dilemma of teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education and aims to understand teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education. This research was based on quantitative methodology, using questionnaire survey techniques and observation. We assess and discuss the bibliographic contributions that allowed us to elucidate exclusive conceptions, such as attitudes, attitude formation, and attitude structure towards the inclusion of students with disabilities. We worked with a sample of 150 general education teachers, who share the common characteristic of having specific training in Special Education or working with children with special needs. The application of the questionnaire "Teachers' Attitudes towards the Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Mainstream Education," developed for the study, revealed good psychometric qualities, mainly in terms of internal consistency, and a factorial structure with a probabilistic value P volume of σ 0.05, and a margin of error and confidence level of 95%. The results obtained in this investigation on teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of disability in mainstream education show that, in our sample, the attitudes of mainstream teachers seem to favor the inclusion of students with disabilities. This makes it clear that some teachers have favorable attitudes and some have unfavorable attitudes towards the inclusion of children with special needs within the mainstream education system. This even leads us to believe that the inclusion of students with special needs in mainstream classrooms is fundamental.

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Submitted: 17.04.2026

Accepted: 23.04.2026

Published: 10.05.2026

Keywords: Attitudes, Inclusion, Disability, Teacher, Child and Education

Introduction

Education for all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, or linguistic conditions, is one of the greatest challenges currently faced by educational systems around the world. This spirit is framed within the principle of inclusive education, which envisions education for all, respect for differences, promotion of diversity and inclusion, and reduction of the exclusion of those who, due to their disabilities, are at a disadvantage compared to others considered "normal."

It is the responsibility of inclusive schools to promote education for all by developing a child-centered pedagogy capable of educating all children, including those with severe disadvantages. Thus, the integration of children and young people with disabilities is best achieved within inclusive schools, which serve all children within the community, UNESCO (1994).

In this educational context, teachers' attitudes play an important and decisive role in the students' learning process. These attitudes can either aid or hinder inclusion and can be a decisive factor in the effective implementation of this process. Historically, teachers have not reacted favorably to the inclusion of students with disabilities, even mild ones. The results obtained in different investigations suggest that the effective implementation and success of integration/inclusion depends on the attitudes shown by teachers.

Considering the aforementioned premises and taking into account the impact of teachers' dispositions and actions on the entire inclusive education process, the following scientific question emerged:

- What are the attitudes of teachers towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education?

Research Objectives

- To understand teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education.

Specific Objectives

- To identify the attitudes of teachers in mainstream schools towards the inclusion of children with disabilities;

- Describe the factors that influence their attitudes and,
- To outline inclusive methodological and pedagogical strategies for children with disabilities in mainstream education.

Justification

Our country is characterized by a population diversity, marked by a complex recent history, of a long A war whose consequences extend beyond the physical dimension, devastating the social, moral, and religious fabric, and significantly affecting the psycho-emotional sphere. of the people, there has been a growing number of children in the education system who their abilities and, more often than not, their difficulties condition the normal course of your learning experiences.

By proposing a reflection on teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education, this work poses a challenge not only to teachers and schools, but to all sectors of society in general, to promote humanization, respect for difference and diversity, and to guarantee access to learning opportunities for all children. At the same time, it calls upon the various structures of our government to create policies that favor and encourage inclusive practices in the school environment and beyond. To the academic community and our readers in general, we are opening up another space for initiatives and the consolidation of research on the school inclusion of children and young people who, due to their limitations, are disadvantaged in accessing education equitably.

Research hypotheses

- H1- Teachers express positive attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education;
- H2- Does work experience or years of experience working with children with disabilities have a positive or negative influence? negatively affect teachers' attitudes towards Inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education.

This study was conducted between 2022 and 2023. The study took place in the city of Luena, Moxico province, with the selection of various schools and teachers. This city was chosen because it had inclusive classrooms.

Attitudes

Concept of Attitudes

To better understand the subject under study, let's begin by defining attitude versus inclusion. According to Thomas and Znaniecki (1915), attitude is "a process of individual consciousness that determines the individual's real or possible activities in the social world." These authors present us with a view more closely linked to the notion of time and social space that the individual reflects in their actions [1].

According to Allport (1935), the concept of attitude constitutes a "state of mental or neural preparedness, arranged by means of knowledge, and exerting a dynamic influence on individual responses to all objects or situations with which it relates" [2].

In this specific case, it is clear that attitude is an individual's response to stimuli absorbed by the sensory and cognitive paradigm; these exert a powerful and impactful influence on how we respond through action during our relationship with people or objects, and their abstractions.

Formation of Attitudes

More than knowing what attitudes are, it is important to understand how they are formed, so that we can understand how a teacher shapes positive or negative attitudes in relation to the Inclusive Education model. Since the teacher is first and foremost a "person," and according to research, we can assert that teachers' attitudes are a psychological tendency that is organized through their life experiences and learning, and their training. This psychological tendency is crucial to the teacher's performance in any given situation.

Regarding attitude formation, we can distinguish two basic theoretical currents: one that focuses on cognitive processes and directs the question of attitude formation towards the theme of beliefs; another that analyzes the affective aspect of the attitude formation process, attributing its formation to emotional experiences, without the need for rational support [3].

Evaluative judgments are expressed through three different categories: direction, intensity, and accessibility. Direction, when analyzed,

can be related to the focus and "trajectory" of the evaluation; intensity to the strength of the initiative; and accessibility to the willingness of the object to be evaluated. In the next section, we will understand more about the structure of attitudes.

Structure of Attitudes

It is essential to describe the basic aspects of attitudes in order to analyze and define them. Beraza (2000) states that the basic components of attitudes are four:

- Attitudes are an internal process or a dimension of the human being that guides and leads to a certain way of acting;
- Attitudes are a condition of the person, adaptable to circumstances, born and maintained in the interaction that the person has with others;
- Attitudes are not static, fixed, definitive or unchangeable, they are something that is built, taught, modified and replaced by others; and
- Attitudes are complex human phenomena. In context, we can clearly see that within this complexity, the ability to change attitudes from a sociocultural perspective, guided by a professional bias in the case of teachers, is a positive aspect and influences their view of the condition of students with disabilities.

Theories about Attitude

Among the explanatory theories of attitudes, some emphasize the motivational functions of attitudes, others the cognitive functions, the role of action orientation, and the social functions of attitudes.

Theory of Planned Action

The theory of Planned Action is the successor to the theory of Reflective Action as a consequence of the attempt to predict that conduct is not entirely voluntary and under control. This benefits the theory of encompassing behavioral control, to highlight precisely those behaviors that are not under this control (Ajzen, 1988). This theory also presents the social and personal influences on behavior [4].

The perception of control has proven to be an important predictive element, since it can be related to behavior both indirectly, through behavioral intention, and directly to it (without intentional mediation). Furthermore, human action is influenced by factors that can be internal and external: for example, knowledge, skill, and strong desires [5,6].

It is important to consider that the relative value of these variables as decisive factors in behavior also depends on the behavior in question and the population being estimated. This model also recognizes that attitudes, subjective norms, and self-efficacy themselves have underlying beliefs about the implications of behavior, prevailing norms and/or referent behaviors, and about particular impediments to behavior.

The Contact Theory (Allport, 1954)

Contact theory is one of the most widely used theoretical approaches to studying professionals' attitudes towards people with disabilities [7]. Allport went further, stating that it was necessary to specify under what conditions contact would facilitate the perception of similarity between members of these groups, leading him to develop a kind of taxonomy of the factors to be studied to make contact theory possible.

This taxonomy contains the following factors: **Quantitative factors; Status factors ; Role aspects; Attractive environment; Individual personality.**

Currently, contact theory is used not only to keep people together, but also for the integration of groups suffering from exclusion, for example: Children with Disabilities. The theory also aims to promote positive attitudes through planned interaction experiences and a precisely organized environment [8].

Teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education.

After analyzing attitudes and their components, and the elements that influence their manifestations to the point where they become solid, appreciable, measurable, and judgeable behaviors, the study of teachers' attitudes is particularly important in empowering them for inclusive education.

It is well known that the discussion of inclusive education brings, among other assumptions, two important changes to the teaching-learning process of children and young people with disabilities. On the one hand, attention has shifted to the means that the school must offer to be accessible, adequate, and meet the educational needs of all students. On the other hand, the entire school community—management bodies, teachers, students, and families—is, in some

way and perhaps for different reasons, included in the discussion about the inclusion of students with special educational needs, ceasing to be a subject restricted to specialized school professionals. Thus, in the current context, a teacher, upon graduating, must not only be competent in the subject matter they teach but must also be able to promote learning and participation for all students, providing opportunities for development and educational inclusion.

Factors Influencing and Methodological Strategies in Schools and Pedagogical Practices within the Context of School Inclusion

Experiences within the teaching profession prove that no two students are alike, that there is no typical student body, and that being able to identify the needs of each individual, to know how it is easiest for them to learn, is even more motivating, making the work much more effective and satisfying. This way of teaching and responding to each student, this willingness to respect diversity, valuing it as a richness of the classroom and not as a problem, complicates life in the short term, but it is what gives it meaning in the long term.

The following lines present some considerations on the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that can affect teachers' attitudes in the inclusive education process, and some methodological and pedagogical strategies implemented by teachers from the perspective of inclusive education, as well as a summary concerning special education in Angola.

Factors influencing teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education.

The attitude of teachers towards the inclusion process in the educational system can be conditioned by several factors, according to [9]. Aspects such as length of service, gender, academic level, typology of educational needs, and the school environment should be considered; these are some of the factors that can influence teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities. Research Methodology

To This study employed a quantitative, descriptive methodology to describe teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with special needs.

Population and sample

As our population, we chose the universe of teachers from various schools who have had contact with students with special educational needs or have taught in an inclusive classroom.

Sample; To determine or select our sample, we used probabilistic sampling, allowing us to choose our sample through simple random sampling. This sample consisted of 150 teachers from various institutions, most of whom have experience working with children or in inclusive classrooms.

Techniques

Survey: This technique was used to collect data from the population of this study, and for its implementation, a questionnaire on teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education was developed. It is composed of Block I: attitudes about inclusive education and Block II: inclusive pedagogical practices, presented in the form of scales to assess, respectively, beliefs and attitudes about inclusive education. The responses to the items on this scale were presented using a Likert-type scale.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collected through the application of

the questionnaires and the characterization form. Individual data were processed using appropriate software, SPSS v.20. (*Statistical Package for the Social Sciences*), aiming to give greater scientific reliability to the work. While Excel served as support for the construction of the tables that could provide explanatory support to the data obtained through SPSS, and to test the validity of the hypotheses, the Mann U test and the T-test were used.

Presentation of Data, Analysis and Discussion of Results

Presentation of the Data

This study aimed to analyze teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education, as well as to identify teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education.

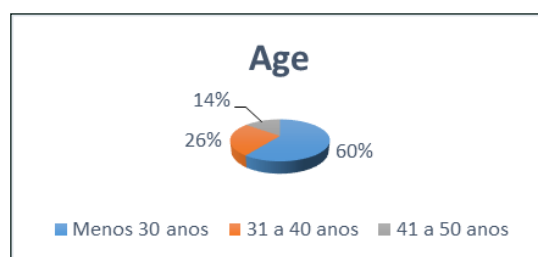
Results of the sociodemographic and professional characterization

In summary, we will now present the socio-demographic variables and how each of them influences attitudes, allowing us to present the methodological strategies necessary for addressing the issue of inclusion of children with disabilities.

Table 1: By Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage Cumulative
Under 30 years old	90	60	60
31 to 40 years old	39	26	86
41 to 50 years old	20	14	100
Total	150	100	

Source: by own hands



Graph 1: Regarding age

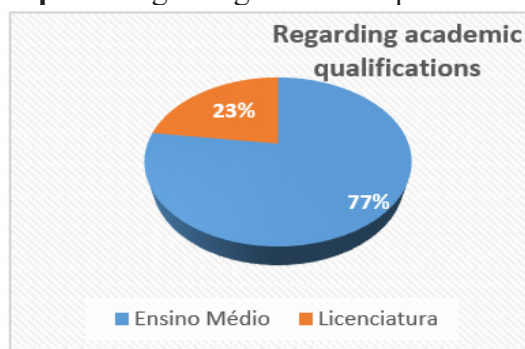
Regarding age, we can see that the majority of teachers surveyed in our research are under 30 years old, representing 60 percent of the majority of the teaching staff selected for our research at this institution.

Table 2: Regarding Academic Qualifications

Qualifications academics	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage Cumulative
High school	116	77.33	77.33
Bachelor's degree	34	22.67	100
Total	150	100	

Source: Handmade

Graph 2: Regarding academic qualifications



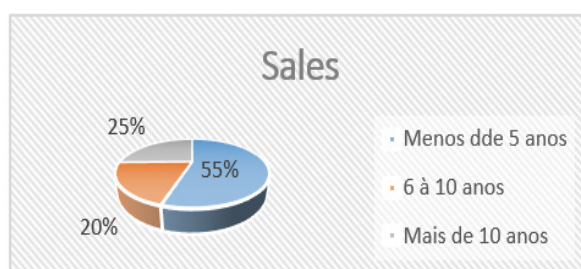
Regarding academic qualifications, we can see that the majority of teachers have a high school diploma, representing 77%, while only 23% have a university degree, making it clear that the teachers have a very low and inferior level of education.

Table 3: Professional Experience as a Teacher

Experience professional as a teacher	Freq.	Percent.	Percentage Cumulative
Less than 5 years	82	54.67	54.67
6 to 10 years	30	20	74.67
More than 10 years	38	25.33	100
Total	150	100	

Source: Handmade

Chart 3: Professional experience as a teacher



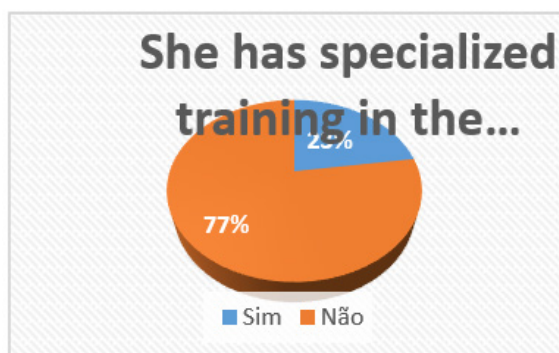
Regarding the table that represents the teacher's experience in relation to length of service or their experience as a teacher, most teachers have less than 5 years of experience, representing 55%, while 25% represent teachers with more than 10 years in the sector. This shows us that the teachers at this institution have little experience working with people with disabilities.

Table 4: Do you have specialized training in the area of Special Education (specialization/postgraduate course)?

	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage Cumulative
Yes	34	22.67	22.67
No	116	77.33	100
Total	100	100	

Source: handmade

Chart 4: Do you have specialized training in the field of Special Education (specialization/postgraduate course)?



Regarding the existence of specialized training in the area of special education, we have seen that the teachers in question do not have specialized training as such, as we can see 77 percent of those surveyed do not have specialized training in special education, and the institution only has 8 teachers trained or specialized in the area of special education, thus representing 23%.

Results of surveys regarding the Attitude Scale

At this point, we will clearly describe the results obtained from applying the attitude scale and the subsequent interpretation made using SPSS software, along with an analysis based on the reading of the graphs.

Block I - Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Mainstream Education

Table 5: Survey results regarding the Attitude Scale

No		I absolutely agree.		I agree		I neither agree nor disagree.		I neither agree nor disagree.		I completely disagree.	
		Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
1	I believe that all children, including those with disabilities, can be taught in a regular classroom.	47	31.3	73	48.7		0	30	20		0
2	All children have educational potential, including those with disabilities.	47	31.3	98	68.3		0		0		0
3	I consider it essential that children with disabilities be included in special education classes.	56	37.3	26	17.3	26	17.3	43	28.67		0

4	Children with disabilities should be accompanied by special education teachers as a supplementary educational tool.	43	28.7	43	28.7	34	22.67	30	20		0
5	It is the school that must adapt to the needs and characteristics of children and young people.	17	11.3	98	65.3	17	11.3	17	11.3		0
6	"Education should be flexible – I mean the kind of flexibility that allows educators to modify the curriculum to suit their objectives."	82	54.7	16	45.3		0		0		0
7	Each child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities, and learning needs.	64	42.7	52	34.7		0	17	11.3	17	11.3
8	Children with disabilities should only be accompanied by special education teachers if absolutely necessary.	17	11.3	68	45.3	17	11.3	17	11.3	30	20
9	I consider the collaboration of other educators, teachers, and technicians essential to support children with greater difficulties, particularly those with disabilities.	68	45.3	82	54.7		0		0		0
10	All children should learn together, whenever possible, regardless of the difficulties and differences they may have.	64	42.7	64	42.7	22	14.67		0		0
11	Every child has a fundamental right to education and should have the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning.	68	45.3	82	54.7		0		0		0
12	The inclusion of all children in mainstream education is fundamental so that each one can find their place and participation in society.	64	42.7	86	57.3		0		0		0
13	Children with disabilities should receive supplementary educational support within the context of "normal" curriculum guidelines, and not within different curriculum guidelines.	43	28.7	64	42.7	26	17.3	17	11.3		0
14	The inclusion of students with disabilities in the classroom disrupts the normal functioning of classes.	26	17.3	34	22.7	26	17.3	26	17.3	30	20

Own elaboration

Based on studies of teachers' attitudes towards this situation, we sought support in Likert's theories to better understand these attitudes, and for this purpose we used this scale to better clarify the situation. Regarding the inclusion of children with disabilities in a regular classroom, we can see that 48.7% of teachers agree that students should be included in a regular classroom, meaning that it makes no difference

whether children with disabilities or without disabilities are in a regular classroom, without excluding any student. Regarding the idea of a school for all, 48.7% of teachers unanimously agree that the school should be inclusive, or rather, it should be for everyone and for all, without excluding anyone.

Regarding the potential that all children possess, with-

out exception, including those with disabilities or special needs, we observed that teachers agree that their students have the same capacity for learning, as 68.3% absolutely agree that all of them possess educational potential.

We realize that changing attitudes and creating a behavioral foundation favorable to the inclusion of students with special needs in mainstream national education will require awareness-raising, teacher train-

ing, and, in terms of infrastructure, remodeling school buildings and ensuring accessibility for all types of physical disabilities.

Based on what has been discussed here, we must consider that teachers live and work in a community, they are social beings, and properly reinforced, encouraged, and motivated behavior can lead to a positive ripple effect. Reinforced positive attitudes can influence their repetition.

Results of Inclusive Methodological and Pedagogical Strategies

Table 6: Results of Inclusive Methodological and Pedagogical Strategies

No		I absolutely agree.		I agree		I neither agree nor disagree.		I disagree.		I completely disagree.	
		Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
1	In my classroom, I value the educational potential of all children, including those with disabilities.	64	42.7	64	42.7	22	14.6		0		0
2	When planning classroom activities, I include activities in pairs or in small groups.	30	20	98	65.3	22	14.7		0		0
3	I usually share my concerns and questions about children, including those with disabilities, with other educators.	56	37.3	94	62.7		0		0		0
4	In planning activities, I include the use of diverse educational materials to adapt the activities to all children, including those with disabilities.	30	20	120	80		0		0		0
5	I make adjustments to the classroom layout so that all children, including those with disabilities, can actively participate in the activities.		0	34	22.7	30	20	41	37.3	30	20
6	It is common for me to share my teaching practices, which are most effective with the children in my classroom, including those with disabilities, with other educators.	56	37.3	43	28.7		0	26	17.3	26	17.3
7	I feel uncomfortable with the presence of children with disabilities in my classroom.	30	20		0		0	68	45.3	52	34.7
8	I promote autonomy and equal participation for all children, including those with disabilities, in my classroom.	68	45.3	82	54.7		0		0		0
9	I adapt to different developmental styles in order to ensure good learning for everyone, including children with disabilities.	26	17.3	47	31.3	26	17.3	30	20	22	14.7

Own elaboration

To better explain our research, we sought guidance in the attitude scale analyzed through the Likert-type scale, as it allowed us in this research to measure the teacher's attitude towards the inclusion of students with special needs. Having described and interpreted our interviewees in relation to the research variables, we can, to some extent, explain the teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities. We can see that the teacher presents positive attitudes and has a frequency of 42.9% agreement and a cumulative 85.8% agreement rate, which clearly shows that the teacher has favorable attitudes towards the presence of students in class, without focusing on their disabilities.

Regarding activities in pairs or groups, it became clear that 65.7% of those surveyed agree that these types of activities exist and that through them all students have been included without their choosing.

We also sought to understand the teacher's attitude towards discomfort in the presence of children with disabilities. It became quite clear, with 45.7% disagreeing with the idea that teachers feel uncomfortable in the presence of children with disabilities in classrooms, as disability does not lead teachers to exclude students from the classroom. They presented a contrary methodological strategy regarding this situation. On the other hand, we saw that teachers have used methods that promote autonomy and equal participation for all children, regardless of their physical, psychological, or social condition. Regarding the methodological strategies used, it became clear, based on inclusion issues, that teachers present fundamental methodologies that allow for the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education.

Hypothesis Testing on Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Mainstream Education

We will clearly present the results regarding the two hypotheses presented in our research. To verify these hypotheses, it was necessary to use two types of tests: the **Mann-Whitney U test and the T-test**. Both were extremely important and provided fundamental support to this research.

Mann-Whitney U test

As we know, the Mann-Whitney U test is a type

of non-parametric test that analyzes quantitative independent variables with a normal distribution and ordinal qualitative variables, focusing on a qualitative attribute. Therefore, we intend to analyze nominal qualitative variables, specifically focusing on teachers' attitudes towards the presence of students with disabilities.

To obtain a truly concrete analysis, we meticulously examined our study, where our independent variable is valuation and the dependent variable is teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students. To better explain this, we used a *Likert -type scale* in which individuals expressed their degree of agreement regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms and the change in their attitudes in response to this situation.

Test T

Therefore, our study presents a positive probabilistic value in the t-test, making it clear that our hypothesis is true and was confirmed or verified, as shown by the variable test for equality of the mean with a value of 2.0 in a fairly clear comparison between the two variables: on one side, the independent variable, which was educational qualifications, and on the other, the dependent variable, which was teachers' attitudes. We can verify this with a significance level of 0.072, as it is clear that the *P- value* is greater than the value 0.05.

Because the same result is seen categorically, proving that our hypothesis is true. Therefore, we conclude that teachers with a higher academic level tend to have positive attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in the classroom, compared to teachers with a higher education level .

Second Hypothesis

Test T

Regarding the testing of our second hypothesis, we can see from the data presented that it seeks to relate the independent variable professional experience with the dependent variable attitude, since in this case we want to know if experience or length of service can influence the attitude of teachers towards students with disabilities.

The summary of the hypothesis test clearly demonstrated, through the study of means, a fundamental analysis in the Mann-Whitney test. It

was crucial to see that the probabilistic value, or simply the *P-value*, is 0.05, thus showing our margin of error and a confidence level of 95%. Through the non-parametric test, it is possible to confirm that our hypothesis is true, as the significance level is above the *P-value*, showing a significance level of 0.638. This proves that teachers with more years of service tend to have more favorable attitudes towards the inclusion of students with special needs compared to teachers with less experience .

Conclusion

The conclusions of this work can only be considered within the context in which it was developed. Therefore, we intend to reflect on teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education , with the aim of improving... performance and results, and in the relentless pursuit of change, based on an updated The inclusive school paradigm, initiated by a new vision of school and educational disability, could benefit everyone involved in it.

Based on the results obtained during this investigation, similarly to the attitudes of teachers towards the inclusion of disability in mainstream education , it was demonstrated that, in our sample, the attitudes of teachers Regular education seems favorable to the inclusion of students with disabilities, meeting the value average observed in the hypothesis test . To understand teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream education , and using a quantitative methodology, We seek to identify the sociodemographic characteristics.

Through the sample, a statistically significant relationship was observed between academic qualifications, professional experience in special education, and teachers' attitudes. Regarding the inclusion of disabilities in mainstream education , the same result is categorically observed in both parametric and non-parametric tests, thus making it clear that our hypotheses are true.

We designed this study with the fundamental objective of analyzing teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities. Regarding the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education, we aimed, at the same time, to identify teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children

with disabilities in mainstream education; describe the factors that influence their attitudes and outline strategies. Inclusive methodological and pedagogical approaches for children with disabilities in education. regular, which were achieved, as reflected in the responses collected in the study. The main conclusions that emerge from this study reflect the asymmetries in attitudes based on teacher training, the level at which teachers teach - school environment and specific training in special education.

The challenges of inclusive education are evident in the operationalization of theoretical concepts within the educational practices of schools and the methodological strategies of teachers. Inclusive education, as a guideline aimed at serving everyone regardless of individual differences, is only achievable with curricular diversity and diverse teaching and learning strategies. Its focus is on the school, not on the student or the teacher individually. Thus, it is expected that in an inclusive school setting, teachers will have to acquire and/or improve their professional skills, making it essential for schools and government bodies to invest in teacher training at this level, paying particular attention to mainstream education, where the area of professional training is neither specific nor directed towards students with Special Educational Needs [10-22].

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