

TEACHERS ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCLUSION OF REFUGEE CHILDREN IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE CENTERS IN GREECE

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Abstract. *Since 2015, increased numbers of refugee families with pre-school-aged children have arrived in Greece. Inclusion preschool refugee children in quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) centers is about embracing diversity, including every child holistically and providing opportunities for all children to participate and benefit. The present study examined the general ECEC teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of refugee children into their classroom in public ECEC centers, their behavior and factors that might influence the attitudes towards inclusion based on Eagly & Chaiken's three-component model of attitude and Bronfenbrenner's theory. The research sample consists of 114 ECEC teachers working at public municipal child care centers in the area of Thessaloniki in Northern Greece. The results showed that the ECEC teachers have positive attitude towards inclusion of refugee children, however seemed doubtful in the implementation of inclusion.*

Keywords: *Inclusion; attitudes; preschool refugee children; preschool centers; preschool teachers.*

To cite this article:

Megalonidou, C. & Vitoulis, M. (2022). Teachers Attitudes towards Inclusion of Refugee Children in Early Childhood Education and Care Centers in Greece. *Education. Innovation. Diversity*, 2(5), 6-19. DOI <https://doi.org/10.17770/eid2022.2.6904>

Introduction

Protracted conflict, violations of human rights, climate change and lack of economic opportunity have continued to drive millions of vulnerable people to more secure countries. In 2019, there were 71 million refugees and displaced people around the world, with an average of 37,000 persons fleeing their homes every day. According to UNHCR, more than 57% of registered refugees are from Syria (6.7 million), followed by refugees from Afghanistan (2.7 million) and South Sudan (2.3 million). Moving beyond providing immediate support to asylum seekers and new refugees, policy-makers have to deal with the challenges of how to promote the inclusion of those who are likely to stay, including refugee children and youth (OECD, 2019). Refugee children are a particularly vulnerable group that is easily overlooked in official statistics (Fazel & Stein, 2002). Globally, over one sixth of forcibly displaced persons are children under the age of five. Between 2018 and 2020, an average of between 290,000 and 340,000 children per year were born into a refugee life. Greece saw a dramatic increase in asylum-seeker arrivals starting in 2014. The 2016 EU-Turkey statement and the closure of the Greek border with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, along with border closures along the Western Balkan route, led to an increase in the share of newcomers remaining in the country. Syrians constitute the largest group among arrivals to Greece, along with significant numbers of newcomers from Afghanistan and Iraq, including a range of African and Middle Eastern countries. More than one-third (37%) of refugees who arrived irregularly via sea crossings in 2017 were children. Today, it hosts over 118,000 refugees and asylum seekers the majority of whom are children and youth and the numbers continue to increase. A Large number of documented refugees were moved in the region of Northern Greece. 43 % come from Syria, 27% from Iraq, 7% from Afghanistan, 5% from Turkey, 4% from Pakistan, and 2% from Iran (UNHCR, 2019). Refugee and asylum-seeking children by age at November 2019 were 17100 aged 0 -5 and 13.730 aged 6-12.

The research objective of the current study is to examine teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of refugee children into their classroom in ECEC centers and factors that might influence the attitudes towards inclusion based on Eagly & Chaiken's three-component model of attitude and Bronfenbrenner's theory.

Literature review

Access to quality early childhood care and education (ECCE), therefore, can be vital in laying the foundations for children's long-term development, well-being, learning, social and health (Vandenbroeck, 2015; Vandenbroeck et al., 2018). Inclusion is about encompassing diversity, including every child holistically and providing opportunities for all children to participate and benefit. Inclusion is a basic human right. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child proclaimed that everyone children have the right to an education (Article 28) that develops their ability, prepares children for life, respects their family, cultural and other identities and languages (Article 29). The Regulation 155 of the National Regulations states that an approved provider must take reasonable steps to make sure that the education and care services provide

In refugee contexts, and in response to the needs of refugee children and their families, inclusion in quality ECCE centers serves as a powerful equalizer, helps young children to develop the resilience that is required to cope with traumatic and stressful situations like the conflicts and other emergencies, provide possible solutions for many issues that the young refugee children face, including trauma, mental health and exclusion. Inclusion in quality ECEC centers can provide physical protection, where children can learn basic knowledge about health and hygiene, where they will receive extra nutrition and where care and supervision will be provided by staff identify needs and work with parents and caregivers (UNESCO, 2021). Inclusion in ECEC centers offers psychosocial protection by providing opportunities for young children to play, to require part in cultural activities and by supporting social networks in the community. Also can promote a sense of safety and normality in children, whose lives are disrupted, help to reestablish familiar routines, centered on child-rearing activities and care needed for healthy development. For refugee children who have experienced trauma and loss, this psycho-social dimension will be particularly important to help their development and wellbeing (UNESCO, 2021; WHO, 2018). ECEC can provide cognitive protection, by helping children develop academic skills and by encouraging them to problem solve, listen, express their opinions, and make their own choices (UNESCO 2021). To ensure inclusion in quality ECEC centers for refugee children, it is important to respond to the specific needs of refugee families and their children, including their need for emotional support, and therefore the challenges of providing ECEC to culturally and linguistically diverse groups (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Buchmüller et al., 2018).

Staff in ECEC centers needs to address numerous issues, including emotional difficulties, acculturation problems, language-literacy and basic skill levels, and cultural differences (Lamb, 2020; Park et al., 2018). Inclusion of all children in high quality inclusive ECCE services will bear a commitment to review and adapt pre-service and ongoing professional development and certification of the ECCE workforce to ensure they are fully prepared and supported. Beach (2003) argues that teachers views on other cultures, religions, languages, etc. can influence the successful or non-inclusion of refugee children. Teachers' attitudes could be perceived as the teachers' viewpoints or attitudes towards an idea of the concept of inclusion and its implementations. An attitude can be formed from cognitive, affective and behavior information about the objects and influences the individual's thought and action. Triandis (1971) explains that the attitude construct is related to a person's affective responses including feelings, moods and emotions. Thinking positively or negatively towards

a group of people can be categorized as having a positive or negative affect towards a member of that group. Sharma et al. (2006) claim that a positive attitude is the most crucial factor in becoming an inclusive teacher (Eagly & Chaiken, 2005). Teacher training is the first step in promoting positive attitudes as teachers must know how to handle differences in the classrooms. Hsien, Brown & Bortoli (2009) in investigating preschool teachers qualifications and attitudes towards inclusion reported overall there was a relationship between teacher attitude and educational qualifications, the higher the educational qualifications the more positive the attitude. A literature review conducted in four European countries (Belgium, Denmark, Slovenia and Netherlands) the importance of professional competencies of staff is highlighted to promote social inclusion. The ability and willingness to communicate with parents, to manage disagreements, to learn from them, and to explore various angles of a subject in an open-minded way are mentioned (Fukkink et al., 2018). It has been reported that staff in ECEC centers often lack knowledge and experience in how to best support the development of refugee children and work with families (OECD, 2019). There is a lack of research and evidence-based knowledge on best practices leaving teachers not sufficiently prepared and supported in their work with this target group (Hurley et al., 2011; Moinolnolki & Han, 2017b; Park & Katsiaficas, 2019). ECEC centers have to ensure efforts are put in place to build professional knowledge, skills and attitudes of those educators working in refugee contexts by offering training and professional development specific to working with this target group, and by organizing coaching, and sufficient opportunities for reflection, team and peer support (Krakouer et al., 2017; Lunneblad, 2017; Vandekerckhove & Aarssen, 2019). Acknowledging cultural backgrounds and personal histories of families is seen as an essential step in creating inclusive and respectful learning environments that create a sense of community and belonging (Buell et al., 2020) and help educators to address the diversity and heterogeneity of the groups of children and families they are working with. Educators have to find ways to effectively communicate with children with other language backgrounds (Hurley et al., 2011). Forlin and Chambers (2011) suggested that long-term support for teachers specifically required for mentoring new teachers as well as providing them continuous professional development (Fukkink et al., 2018).

For the purpose of this study, the three-component model of attitude which are cognitive, affective and behavioral (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Triandis, 1971) and Bronfenbrenner's theory were used. Solinger, van Olffen & Roe (2008) suggest that the use of the three-component model be adopted as a generic model for predicting and measurement of the organizational attitude. Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory provides a useful framework for understanding the intersecting experiences and social environments that shape one's development. In particular the ecological systems theory describes an individual as being influenced by—and having an influence on—all levels of the system in which they live. The first layer of the system is the microsystem which is related to the teacher's immediate environment. Teachers interact with children and factors like knowledge, experience and training might contribute to the teachers' attitudes towards inclusion refugee children. The mesosystem describes the interaction between microsystems and this includes interactions between the teacher and school. The teacher's actions or beliefs may shape the school environment or functioning, while the policies or climate of the school may shape the teacher's professional decision making, professional competency is regarded as issues in the implementation of inclusion. Another level is the exosystem which describes systems that the individual does not participate in but that indirectly affect them through one or more microsystems. Government policies can be considered as exosystem variables that affect inclusion and the larger cultural context or macrosystem in which the schools and teachers operate.

In Greece, Early Childhood Education and Care is provided in two phases. ECEC provision for children under age 4 (ISCED 010) includes: municipal infant care (vrefikoi stathmoi for 2 months to 2.5 years), infant/child care (vrefonipiakoi stathmoi for 2 months to 4 years) and child care centers (paidikoi stathmoi for 2.5 to 4 years), for which the Ministry of Interior is responsible and private pre-school education and care settings (profit-or non-profit-making), as well as part-time childcare settings for infants or/and children and integrated care infant/child care centers, for which the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is responsible. Priority for registration is given to children of working parents or to those from families with many children, to orphans, to those from needy or single-parent families, to children of unmarried mothers, of divorced or separated parents, of parents with physical or mental disabilities. ECEC for children aged 4-6 (ISCED 020) includes: Pre-primary schools (nipiagogeia), public and private, are part of primary education for which the competence of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs is responsible. The main objectives of this study are to determine the attitudes of the preschool teachers towards the inclusion of refugee children in ECEC provision for children under age 4 (ISCED 010), factors that might influence their attitudes, changes need to be considered or made at the preschool level before children are included.

Research questions

1. What is the attitude of the preschool teachers towards the inclusion of refugee children in ECEC (ISCED 010)?
2. What factors that influence the attitudes of the preschool teachers towards the inclusion?
3. To what extent do these factors affect the preschool teachers' attitudes?

Research Methodology

The research population consists of 114 ECEC teachers working in the area of Thessaloniki in Northern Greece. Thessaloniki is the second-largest city in Greece, with over 1 million inhabitants in its metropolitan area and the capital of the geographic region of Macedonia, the administrative region of Central Macedonia and the Decentralized Administration of Macedonia and Thrace. The municipalities that have been historically associated with the Thessaloniki metropolitan area are Thessaloniki, Kalamaria, Neapoli-Sykies, Pavlos Melas, Kordelio-Evosmos, Ampelokipoi-Menemeni and the municipality of Pylaia-Hortiatis.

The sample consists of 114 ECEC teachers, working at public municipal child care centers (vrefikoi stathmoi, vrefonipiakoi stathmoi and paidikoi stathmoi). First an information sheet was sent by e-mail with basic information about the research, its aims and methods. The information sheet stated clearly that participation was voluntary. The questionnaires were made through Google Forms and were distributed electronically on social networks and in electronic training groups. The present research was conducted from October to December of the academic year 2021. The average time taken to complete the questionnaire was 10-15 minutes.

The research tool used in this study is the questionnaire. It is chosen as a method of collecting data because is the main research tool of the quantitative method, it is easy to create and use, ways of analyzing the material are standardized, the researcher cannot influence answers and they can ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents. Moreover due to the situation in the country with the pandemic (SARS-COV-2) the questionnaires were distributed electronically. The responses were closed-ended with Yes-No answer and Likert-grade rated: a) from 1 to 5 where 1=Not at all, 2=Little, 3=Enough, 4=Very and 5=Very and b) from 1 to 5 where 1=I disagree strongly, 2=I disagree slightly, 3=I do not agree, nor disagree,

4=I agree a little and 5=I agree very much. The Likert scale is considered to be the most widespread type of scale to measure the attitudes, beliefs and views of large groups. This instrument consists of four parts: in the first part of the questionnaire, participants will have to answer demographic questions such as gender, age, position, years of service, basic and multicultural studies. In Part B there are Likert-type questions measuring beliefs relative to inclusion (Cognitive component), in part C measure the teachers' emotional reactions when they had to deal with refugee children (Affective component) and part D measure intentions (Behavioral component). On the basis of information gathered from the literature and past studies, an early draft of the questionnaire was distributed to twelve (N=12) early childhood teachers, from different ages and areas, who did not participate in the main phase of the study. After taking into account their comments and recommendations, the final version of the questionnaire was developed. The teachers were asked to respond to the questionnaire elements and to consider whether this questionnaire was indeed. It was also to ensure that the terms used were not ambiguous and to see how people interpret the questions, to find out how long the questionnaire took to answer and if there was any feature that people were not likely to answer. For the internal consistency of the questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha correlations were calculated. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients were: $\alpha=0.81$ for the scale addressing the cognitive component, $\alpha=0.94$ for the affective component and finally $\alpha=0.75$ for the behavioral component (Cronbach's alpha coefficient of a scale should be above 0.70). In order to evaluate questionnaire's structural validity, Pearson correlation coefficients were applied amongst questions. All correlation coefficients were high and statistically significant, advocating the validity of the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

The SPSS (Statistical package for Social Sciences) was used for the needs of the present study. In addition, descriptive statistics averages and standard deviations were computed, as well as inductive statistics for hypothesis tests to answer key research questions. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) were calculated first to describe participants' responses to each item of questionnaire. A t-test was used to compare the differences in teachers' attitudes and perceptions. The $p<.01$ level was selected to determine the statistical significance of the t-test results. Finally, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare means between independent groups.

Analysis of Results

The study involved 114 ECEC teachers, of which 24.60% (n=28) are graduates of the Pedagogical Department of Pre-Primary Education (nipiagogoi- ISCED 6), 40.4 % (n=46) are graduates of Department of Early Childhood Education and Care (ISCED 6), 35.0% (n=40) are Early Childhood Education and Care Assistants (ISCED 5). As for the reference for the years of service 15.8% (n=18) are the teachers with 1-5 years of service, 20.2% (n=23) had 6-10 years of service, 25.5% (n=29) had 11-15 years of service, 18.5% (n=21) had 16-20 years of service and 20.0% % (n=23) had 21-25 years of service. 52.7% (n=60) of participants had in-service multicultural training, while 47.3% (n=54) had no in-service training in relation to multicultural education. Of 114 participants 19.3% (n=22) had no work experience with refugee children, 59.7% (n=68) little work experience and 21.0% (n=24) had lot of experience. Table 1 shows descriptive information on the participating teachers.

Table 1 Descriptive information's on the ECEC participating teachers'

Variables	Categories	Frequencies	Fig. Frequencies
Age	20-24	2	1.8%
	25-29	9	7.9%
	30-34	18	15.8%
	35-39	34	29.9%
	40-44	30	26.4 %
	45-49	13	11.4 %
	50-up	8	6.8%
Years of service	1-5	18	15.8%
	6-10	23	20.2%
	11-15	29	25.5%
	16-20	21	18.5%
	21-25	23	20.0%
Basic studies	Pre-primary teachers	28	24.6 %
	Early childhood educators	46	40.4 %
	Assistants	40	35.0 %
In-service multicultural training	Yes	60	52.7%
	No	54	47.3%
Multicultural training	Conference	32	27,1%
	Seminar	42	35,6%
Work experience with refugee children	No experience	22	19.3%
	Rather no experience	68	59.7%
	Rather a lot experience	24	21%

ECCE teachers' asked about their intentions towards inclusion of refugee children in their classroom. The 22.8% (n=26) respond no, 15.8% (n=18) respond yes and 61.4% (n=70) yes under conditions (cognitive component). Of the participants with yes or yes under conditions, 15.7% (n=14) reported that the challenge of being in a ECEC center will promote the academic growth of the refugees children, 22.9% (n=20) of them believed that inclusion will promote social independence, 20.0% (n=18) believed that the presence of the refugee children will promote acceptance of differences on the part of other children, 11.4% (n=10) believed that inclusion will promote emotional development of the refugee children and 15.7% (n=14) believed that inclusion will help their families. Of the participants with no, 19% (n=5) of the respondents reported that inclusion is likely to have a negative effect on the emotional development of the refugee children, 69.3% (n=18) reported that the refugee children will be socially isolated by other children and 65.4% (n=17) of the respondents reported that they are no able to support overwhelming level of needs among refugee children.

The Chi-Square Test of Independence was conducted to examine the effect of the ECCE teacher's age, basic studies, in-service multicultural training on ECCE teacher's intentions towards inclusion of refugee children in their classroom. There was no significant association between the ECCE teachers' age (Pearson $X^2=0.1000$, $df=4$, $p=0.999 > 0.05$), basic studies (Pearson $X^2=1.1139$, $df=4$, $p=0.8921 > 0.05$) with ECCE teacher's intentions towards inclusion of refugee children, but there was significantly correlated with in-service multicultural training $p=0.006 < 0.05$ and work experience with refugee children $P= 0.0158 < 0.05$ (Table 2 & 3).

*Table 2 In-service multicultural training * Intentions towards inclusion of refugee children*

		Intentions towards inclusion of refugee children			
		Yes	Yes under conditions	No	Total
In-service multicultural training	Yes	15 (24.9%)	35 (58.4%)	10 (16.7%)	60 (100%)
	No	3 (5.5%)	35 (64.8%)	16 (29.7%)	54 (100%)
Total		18 (15.8%)	70 (61.4%)	26 (22.8%)	114 (100%)
X ² Tests		Value		Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	
Pearson X ²		10.23955	df 2	P= 0.006	

Table 3 Work experience with refugee children Intentions towards inclusion of refugee children*

		Intentions towards inclusion of refugee children			
		Yes	Yes under conditions	No	Total
Work experience with refugee children	Yes	15 (62.4%)	8 (33.4%)	1 (4.2%)	24 (100%)
	No/ Rather no	3 (3.3%)	62 (68.9%)	25 (27.8%)	90 (100%)
Total		18 (15.8%)	70 (61.4%)	26 (22.8%)	114 (100%)
X ² Tests		Value		Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	
Pearson X ²		8.2943	df 2	P= 0.0158	

The ECCE teachers were asked to report their feelings in relation to their professional competence and qualification to respond and organize inclusion of refugee children. Only 3% of the ECCE teacher's answer I agree, 65% answer I disagree and 32% answer I agree a little (affective component). The participants were asked to report their intentions in relation to inclusion (behavioral component). The 86% of the respondents will co-operate with the parents of the refugee children for the benefit of their children, 23% of the respondents will change their teaching processes (more personalized) to accommodate refugee children in their classroom, 55% will cooperate with other specialist (psychologist, language teacher, social worker), 45% will cooperate with administrator of the center, 67% will promote social inclusion of the refugee children and their families, 79% are willing to engage in in-service on multicultural training, 57% will engage in developing skills for managing behavior of children and 7% of the respondents will do nothing specific. The Chi-Square Test of Independence was conducted to compare the effect of the ECCE teacher's age, basic studies, in-service multicultural training and work experience with refugee children with ECCE teacher's professional competence and qualification to respond and organize inclusion of refugee children. There was no significant association between the ECCE teachers' age (Pearson $X^2=0.138$, $df=2$, $p=0.937 > 0.05$), basic studies (Pearson $X^2=1.428$, $df=2$, $p=0.497 > 0.05$) with teacher's professional competence and qualification to respond and organize inclusion of refugee children. Significantly correlated to teacher's professional competence and qualification to respond and organize inclusion of refugee children was in-service multicultural training (Pearson $X^2=14.7448$, $df=2$, $p=0.001 < 0.05$) and work experience with refugee children (Pearson $X^2=11.813$, $df=1$, $p=0.0006 < 0.05$). There was significant association ECCE teachers' intention towards inclusion of refugee children in their classroom with their feelings in relation to their professional competence and qualification to respond and organize inclusion of refugee children (Pearson $X^2=16.13230$, $df=2$, $p=0.0003 < 0.05$). The Kendall tau-c test ($=0,357$) showed that ECCE teachers who chose "I disagree" about their professional

competence and qualification to responded and organize inclusion of refugee children also have negative intentions towards inclusion of refugee children in their classroom (Table 4).

Table 4 Professional competence and qualification* Intentions towards inclusion of refugee children

		Intentions towards inclusion of refugee children			
		Yes	Yes under conditions	No	Total
Professional competence and qualification	Yes	10 (25.6%)	25 (64.1%)	4 (10.3%)	39 (100%)
	No	8 (10.6%)	45 (60.0%)	22 (29.4%)	75 (100%)
Total		18 (15.8%)	70 (61.4%)	26 (22.8%)	114 (100%)
X ² Tests	Value	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)			
		df			
Pearson X ²	16.13230	2	0.0003		
Kendall's tau-c	0.357				

The ECCE teachers were asked to report factors and problems can influence the inclusion process in a ranking question. Respondents had to rank each of the items into their preferred order using 1 being the most important object to 10 being the least important object. Results are shown in Figure 1. The lack of refugee-specific pedagogical training noted as more fundamental problem (68% of participants rated it 1), followed by the lack of work experience with refugee children scored 4.15. Many teachers has ranked professional development third, also claim that the language barrier is a challenge to be faced (27%), relations with the family of the refugees, lack of external support from social services, lack of practical intercultural competence to meet the overwhelming level of need among student, adapting materials that can cater to their students' needs. Results are shown in Figure 1.

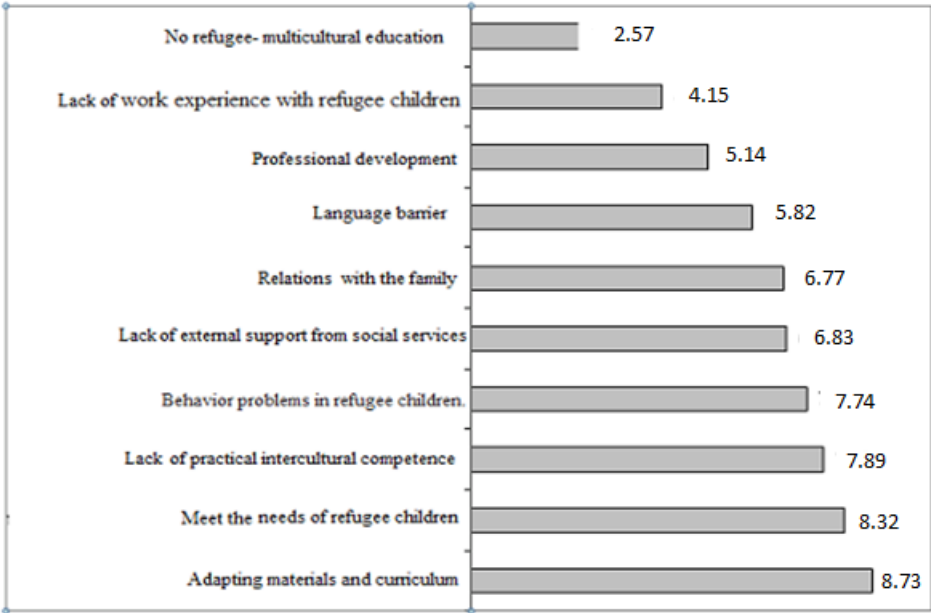


Figure 1 Factors and problems can influence the inclusion process

The analysis of attitudes components revealed that there were associations between: behavior and affective component; Cognitive and affective component; behavior and cognitive

component. Table 5 shows the relationship between the cognitive, affective and behavior components.

Table 5 Relationships between cognitive, affective and behavioural component of attitudes

Attitude Component	Cognitive	Affective	Behaviour
Cognitive	1.00		
Affective	0.48**	1.00	
Behavior	0.61**	0.54**	1.00

**p<0.01

All correlations were significant at the level .01 level. Pearson’s correlations were conducted on all components Correlation between cognitive and affective component was investigated using Pearson correlation coefficient. There was a positive relationship between cognitive component and affective component ($r = 0.48$, $n=117$, $**p<0.01$), there was positive relationship between cognitive component and behavior component ($r = 0.61$, $n= 117$, $**p<0.01$), affective and behavior component ($r = 0.54$, $n= 117$, $**p<0.01$).

Discussion

The present study examined the general ECEC teachers attitudes towards the inclusion of refugee children into their classroom in public ECEC centers, their behavior and factors that might influence the attitudes towards inclusion based on three component theory. In this study the three components of attitudes are connected, what they think (cognitive) may influence their feelings (affective) which impact on their reactions (behavioral). General ECEC teachers have positive attitude towards inclusion of refugee children, however seemed doubtful in the implementation of inclusion. They reported that inclusion will promote the academic growth, social independence, acceptance, emotional development of the refugee children and will help their families. The ECCE teachers reported that factors and problems could influence the inclusion process were the lack of refugee-specific pedagogical training, lack of work experience with refugee children, professional development, also claim that the language barrier is a challenge to be faced, relations with the family of the refugees, lack of external support from social services, lack of practical intercultural competence to meet the overwhelming level of need among student, adapting materials that can cater to their students' needs. Teachers reported feeling insecure in effectively serving refugee children's specific needs and to find overcoming language barriers as well as communication with the parents difficult. Here, teachers' professional competence and work experience seems to play an important role. Research suggests that the quality of ECE teacher training has a strong influence on teachers' perception of self-efficacy to support children's learning and development (Mitter & Putcha, 2018). Varcoe and Boyle (2014) found that while teachers were positively disposed to the idea of inclusion, many felt that they lacked the knowledge, skills and resources to provide fully inclusive classrooms. This perspective is shared by Burke and Sutherland's (2004) research, who found that teachers' concerns toward inclusion are not often based on ideological arguments but instead on pragmatic concerns of how inclusive education can be implemented. Savolainen et al. (2012) large-scale study of teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy in inclusive education revealed that the more teachers believe they are able to implement inclusive practices, the more positive their attitudes towards inclusion. These findings align with previous studies that indicate that the more training and opportunities to reflect on this training to become inclusive educators, the better prepared pre-service teachers feel about adopting this approach to begin their teaching careers (Bentley-Williams & Morgan, 2013). Findings revealed that pre-service teachers had developed good theoretical understanding of inclusive education through

their coursework. However, their development of possible selves as inclusive educators was less well-defined in that they had difficulty extending their understandings of who they might be as inclusive teachers beyond their coursework samples. This difficulty in identifying their cultural selves beyond a stereotypical norm of who a classroom teacher is indicates a need for more and extensive time for pre-service teachers to develop their professional identities as inclusive educators (Tangen, 2017). Accordingly, a study conducted in a university teacher education in Northern Sweden revealed low preparedness to meet the educational needs of immigrant children. Student teachers recognized existing systemic problems in the education of immigrant children and expressed a feeling of a lack of practical intercultural competence to meet such children (Rasheedah, 2019). In a qualitative study, 25 early childhood educators participated in semi-structured interviews to illuminate the experiences of teachers as they work with preschool children and families. The teachers overwhelmingly expressed concern about their lack of cultural competence and a need for professional development (Hurley, 2011). Similarly, Gerokosta investigate the views of the preschool teachers of the island of Chios in Greece, on the integration of refugee children in public kindergartens. The results show that the kindergarten teachers have a positive attitude towards the integration of young children but they consider it necessary to train them and to solve basic problems. Apart from the language of refugee children, teachers believe that the attitude of the local community and the parents of the local pupils may affect the integration of refugee children (Gerokosta, 2017).

Teachers' work experience with refugee children was related to higher agreement with multicultural beliefs and more negative stereotypes. Working with refugee children influences teachers' cultural beliefs and stereotypes in a way that teachers who are experienced in working with refugee children may view children's different backgrounds more positively and consider them when interacting with these, but are also more likely to assume that encounter more difficulties in pre-school and are thus in need of more support from their teachers (Chwastek, 2021). Studies from Australia (Ferfolja, 2009), Ireland (Leavy, 2005), and USA (Walker Dalhouse, Sanders & Dalhouse, 2009) found that teachers required experience, explicit exposure, and training with and about refugees in order to develop socio cultural understanding and perspective to foster safe spaces for learning, build positive teacher-student relationships, recognize the importance of student agency for engagement, and become aware of the particular realities and experiences of refugee children. Both experiences demonstrate that pre-service teachers can and should be better prepared to fulfill the needs of refugee students (Kovinthan, 2016). Başaran (2021) in her study aims to focus on the class and school wide experiences of teachers working with Syrian refugee students and to reveal what these experiences indicate in terms of inclusive education. The main hypothesis of this study is that inclusive education should be reconsidered in terms of teachers' in-service/pre service training, beliefs, attitudes and competencies. Qualitative design was employed in the study since it explored teachers' lived experiences on refugee student phenomenon. The sample consisted of 21 teachers. The results showed that teachers believed that their efforts to provide refugee students with qualified and equal education were not sufficient. It was suggested that curriculum be designed in an exceedingly way that it included refugee students, long-running studies be planned and pre service/in-service trainings be reconsidered contextually (Başaran, 2021). There was a positive effect of beliefs about teachers' own competency (both cultural competency and perceptions about prior preparation) on self-efficacy ($sr^2 = 0.35$) and teachers' willingness in implement practices ($sr^2 = 0.08$) (Kurbegovic, 2016).

Rasheedah & Relebohile investigated teachers' interactions with refugee children in a child care center in Durban. The findings suggest that several factors, including poor classroom management and pedagogical practices, inadequate and inappropriate resources and a lack of professional development opportunities for teachers influenced the character of interactions between the refugee children and their teachers and unless the provision of ECDE in the center

is not significantly improved, for example, by addressing the factors that mentioned above the refugee children will still be poorly prepared for mainstreaming schooling (Rasheedah, 2019). Language and cultural barriers hinder successful communication. Educators perceived these barriers as major obstacles in early childcare programs for refugee families and they emphasized the importance of easy accessibility for refugee families, and an adequate educator-child ratio. They suggested predictable and reliable structures (e.g. repeating timetables) with consistently enforced rules, which promote routines, and foster reliable relationships with refugee children and parents. Gabriel, Kaczorowski and Berry (2017) in their study aimed to shed light on teachers' problems and what their attitudes are after their involvement with students from refugee backgrounds and indicates the foremost frequently claimed problems. The 36% of the respondents claim that adapting materials that may cater to their students' needs may be a problem while many teachers (32%) also claim that the language barrier may be a challenge to be faced. Trauma experiences (mentioned by 26% of teachers), students' lack of schooling experience (mentioned by 21% of teachers), low level of literacy or illiteracy (mentioned by 21% of teachers), and having the ability to deal with the various cultural backgrounds (mentioned by 17% of the participants). Among the least frequent problems as emerged through the particular survey were namely, the potential relations of the teacher with the family of the refugees (mentioned 12% of the teachers), problems with motivation (mentioned by 14% of teachers), large classes (mentioned 12% of teachers) among others. Busch et al. (2018) investigated challenge. Busch et al. (2018) investigated challenges and possible solutions in ECEC. Challenges perceived as most difficult concerned language barriers and communication with parents.

Teachers believe that both schools and teachers play a crucial role in supporting refugee youths' mental wellbeing and every contributes in unique ways. However, schools and teachers are not always successful in supporting refugee youth and teachers reported facing challenges like unclear roles and a lack of resources. In fact, the roles and responsibilities ascribed to teachers have become increasingly complex round the world; they are stretching beyond instruction to encompass activities like psychosocial support and also the fostering of social cohesion and belonging (Schleicher 2018). McDiarmid et al. (2022) investigated 30 Swedish educators' perceptions about the role of centers and teachers in supporting refugee children's mental wellbeing. The foremost common barriers reported were: uncertainty about their responsibilities for supporting youths' emotional health, the variable quality of external social service supports for students, the high variability in the types of needs they encounter, a lack of external support from social services, , the overwhelming level of need among students, and therefore the emotionally taxing nature of supporting students' mental wellbeing. Teachers also noted that they had received little to no refugee pedagogical training. Teachers described these challenges as affecting their personal mental wellbeing which made it difficult for them to supply sustained support to students (McDiarmid et al., 2022). Shriberg (2010) reports that 96% of teachers surveyed had no training at all in the way to educate refugee children; 50 % of them reported interest in receiving information about the culture, politics, history, and education systems of the countries of origins. Almost all of those surveyed wanted to acquire best practices for teaching refugee children, including practical teaching techniques and adaptations of curriculum. Teachers need guidance on how to best educate refugee children and the way to achieve access to the resources available from other similarly situated educators throughout the world. Shriberg points out that 'educators might not be fully awake to the unique and creative strategies and coping skills refugee children possess which will help them attain success as students' (p. 5). Rose (2018) in her doctoral thesis examine the beliefs of teachers within the context of Australian social, political, and education history and policy, as well as the commonly held beliefs towards refugees and refugee children. Ultimately, it was found that teachers' beliefs towards refugee students are deeply complex, subject to multiple influences

and discourses. Moreover, teacher beliefs do not seem to be static; they are demonstrated to point out the flexibility to be reshaped. The experience of teaching refugee students was identified by the participants as crucial to shaping and reshaping their beliefs, as was open discussions with colleagues which led to beliefs being challenged and reshaped. Working conditions, like school culture, funding, and teacher support held some influence on the beliefs of the teachers (Rose, 2018).

Conclusions

The present study examined teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of refugee children into their classroom in ECEC centers and factors that might influence the attitudes towards inclusion based on three-component model of attitude and Bronfenbrenner's theory. In this research the three components of attitudes are interconnected. What the teachers think (cognitive) may influence their feelings (affective) which can have impact on their reactions (behavioral) and also the three components may influence one other. In this study, the ECEC teachers do not feel ready for inclusion and they need support in terms of skills and training, resources and facilities as well as knowledge and awareness about refugee children. Teachers' attitude is influenced by bidirectional interactions within the ecological system. Within the microsystem factors such as training, experience, teaching experience and knowledge influenced the teachers' attitude. Within the mesosystem, the support from social workers, parents, principals and community are needed by preschool teachers. As in the exosystem, teachers also addressed the barriers to be taken into considerations such as the organization of inclusion, the modification of programmers, pedagogy. Within the macrosystem, in terms of designing the inclusion policy professional development (pedagogical and classroom management skills, abilities and training) might be improved.

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