

Systematic Review

Exploring Greek Primary Teachers' Perspectives in Inclusive Education for Special Educational Needs (SEN) Students and Related Research Trends: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Inclusive Education aims to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all students, including those with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities, by promoting accessible teaching practices and supportive learning environments. Although its importance for fostering the academic and social development of diverse learners has been widely recognized in international policy and research, its practical implementation is still under investigation, particularly within the Greek primary education system. This study investigates (a) Greek primary school teachers' perspectives, focusing on their attitudes, knowledge, challenges, and perceived needs in Inclusive Education for SEN students and (b) research trends relating to these perspectives, focusing on publication trends and methodological characteristics, through a systematic literature review using the PRISMA methodology. The analysis revealed a shift in Greek primary teachers' attitudes towards Inclusive Education for SEN students, trending towards neutral or negative responses, alongside limited knowledge, various challenges, and an absence of targeted support mechanisms. The analysis also highlighted chronological gaps between the identified studies in international journals and a variability in methodological approaches and sample characteristics. These insights point to a pressing need for further targeted and ongoing research on Greek primary teachers' perspectives and professional development initiatives to enable effective and inclusive practices for SEN students in Greek primary education.

Keywords: inclusive education for SEN students; research trends; primary teachers; Greece



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1. Introduction

Inclusive Education is an educational approach that aims to provide equitable learning opportunities in mainstream classrooms, for all students, regardless of their backgrounds, abilities, talents, and needs (Dr. Ranbir, 2024). Due to its contribution in providing equal learning opportunities to all students, Inclusive Education has gained significant attention among the scholarly literature and international policy context concerning its proper and successful implementation (Ainscow, 2020). In fact, despite the existing national and international legislative framework for the promotion and implementation of Inclusive Education that covers more than thirty years, scholars still underline the need for educational policy changes in some countries (Ali et al., 2024; Pov et al., 2024; Tah et al., 2024; Zhu, 2024). Apart from this legislative debate, the benefits of Inclusive Education are recognized among all scholars (Ali et al., 2024; Jugan et al., 2024; Lindner et al., 2023; Mishra, 2024;

O'Leary et al., 2025; Radojlovic et al., 2022; Savaş & İsaoglu, 2025; Woodcock & Anderson, 2025; Zhu, 2024). More specifically, the contribution of Inclusive Education in fostering empathy, understanding, and acceptance among students, and also in promoting social cohesion, equity, and a sense of belonging for every individual in any societal sector has been underlined (Ali et al., 2024; Jugan et al., 2024; O'Leary et al., 2025; UNESCO, 1994).

Nevertheless, for the proper implementation of Inclusive Education, the role of teachers in designing and implementing Inclusive Education should be questioned. As such, understanding their perspectives, encompassing attitudes, pedagogical knowledge, perceived barriers, and professional development needs, is essential. Such investigation into primary education settings is crucial as this level of education plays a foundational role in shaping students' development (Asila, 2025; Kryshatanovych et al., 2022)

Beginning with the broader context of Inclusive Education in primary educational settings with special educational needs (SEN) students, a systematic literature review covering studies from Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America (Lindner et al., 2023) reported primary teachers' neutral or ambivalent views towards Inclusive Education for SEN students. The most recent studies have been implemented at a regional or national level, and have shown primary teachers' varied attitudes towards this approach. More specifically, the study of Jugan et al. (2024), implemented in a sample of 30 primary teachers from a public school of a province in the Philippines, showed teachers' positive attitudes towards Inclusive Education for SEN students. The same result was revealed from the study of Mishra (2024) (in 70 primary teachers from a district of India), the study of Zhu (2024) (in 16 primary teachers from a school in the capital of a province in China), the study of Aloka and Mamogobo (2024) (in 6 primary teachers from South Africa), the study of Mantry and Pradhan (2023) (in 100 primary teachers from Jammu and Kashmir, India), and the study of Radojlovic et al. (2022) (in 64 primary teachers from the territory of Belgrade, Serbia). Moreover, the study of Uka (2024) in 204 primary teachers from Kosovo showed neutral teachers' attitudes towards the approach. Finally, the studies of Ali et al. (2024) (in 330 primary teachers from Fiji's Western division), Alsolami and Vaughan (2023) (in 187 primary teachers from Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), and Fu et al. (2021) (in 217 primary teachers from Yunnan Province, China) showed negative teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of SEN students in mainstream classrooms.

In terms of primary teachers' knowledge about the Inclusive Education of SEN students, several studies have identified significant gaps. The study of Siddik (2025) in 36 primary school teachers (both assistant teachers and headteachers) from Bangladesh showed that the majority of them had not received structured training in Inclusive Education. Both Zhu (2024) and Mishra (2024) found that teachers reported limited training in Inclusive Education, while Aloka and Mamogobo (2024) reported teachers' lack of familiarity with Inclusive Education policies. Moreover, the studies of Fu et al. (2021) and Osman (2024) (in 253 primary teachers from the Northern region of Ghana) revealed a lack of participants' knowledge of SEN students' needs. Similarly, a large-scale study in Cambodia involving 1008 primary teachers (Pov et al., 2024) revealed teachers' concerns about their lack of knowledge and skills in including SEN students. Moreover, the studies of Ali et al. (2024), Mantry and Pradhan (2023), and Fu et al. (2021) emphasized teachers' training needs. Even in studies where teachers had received some form of inclusion-related training, such as those of Jugan et al. (2024), Uka (2024), and Siddik (2025), participants still reported feeling unprepared to manage inclusive classrooms effectively.

Previous studies, along with two other recent studies of Rahmatullayeva (2025) (in 20 primary teachers) and Dayso et al. (2025) (in 5 primary teachers from Kabayan, Kibungan, Tuba and Mankayan, Philippines), have also pointed to the various challenges faced by primary teachers in implementing Inclusive Education for SEN students. These include

time constraints (Jugan et al., 2024; Siddik, 2025), increased workload (Pov et al., 2024), institutional support challenges such as the absence of special education staff (Rahmatullayeva, 2025), the lack of collaboration among staff (Dayso et al., 2025), and staff's resistance to inclusive practices (Siddik, 2025). Teachers also reported a lack of effective policies (Mantry & Pradhan, 2023) and lack of financial resources and infrastructure to support inclusion (Ali et al., 2024; Alsolami & Vaughan, 2023; Mantry & Pradhan, 2023; Radojlovic et al., 2022; Rahmatullayeva, 2025; Siddik, 2025; Zhu, 2024). The limited availability of instructional materials and teaching aids (Alsolami & Vaughan, 2023; Dayso et al., 2025; Fu et al., 2021; Pov et al., 2024; Siddik, 2025) was another challenge for teachers along with the difficulties teachers face concerning the adaptations and modifications of existing resources (curricula, lessons, instructions) to meet SEN students' needs (Jugan et al., 2024; Rahmatullayeva, 2025; Siddik, 2025).

Moreover, primary teachers also reported challenges in managing the behavioral difficulties of SEN students (Jugan et al., 2024; Rahmatullayeva, 2025), especially in overcrowded classrooms with limited teaching assistants or special educators (Rahmatullayeva, 2025). Large classroom sizes (Alsolami & Vaughan, 2023; Jugan et al., 2024; Siddik, 2025) as well as the difficulty in providing equal attention to all students (Alsolami & Vaughan, 2023; Pov et al., 2024; Siddik, 2025) were also reported as obstacles. Moreover, the negative attitudes of typically developing peers and their parents towards SEN students (Ali et al., 2024; Fu et al., 2021; Radojlovic et al., 2022; Zhu, 2024) were also reported as challenges. Finally, teachers also expressed discomfort, anxiety, and self-doubt in approaching and educating SEN students (Rahmatullayeva, 2025; Siddik, 2025) and fear of failure and judgement from colleagues and parents of non-SEN students (Rahmatullayeva, 2025). Moreover, society-based challenges such as cultural perceptions of disability and diversity (Rahmatullayeva, 2025) and inherent biases (Dayso et al., 2025) seem also to create barriers to teachers in the implementation of Inclusive Education for SEN students.

Regarding their professional needs in Inclusive Education for SEN students, the international literature has shown that primary teachers frequently emphasized the importance of support from special educators (Jugan et al., 2024; Mishra, 2024; Radojlovic et al., 2022; Zhu, 2024), school administrators and education authorities (Siddik, 2025), the need for ongoing and specialized professional development (Jugan et al., 2024; Mantry & Pradhan, 2023; Siddik, 2025; Zhu, 2024), and clearer policies and legislative frameworks to support inclusion (Mishra, 2024; Zhu, 2024). Other needs identified included curriculum redesign and reduction (Mishra, 2024; Radojlovic et al., 2022), availability of appropriate teaching materials (Jugan et al., 2024; Mishra, 2024), adaptive resources and practical guidelines for inclusive classroom management (Siddik, 2025), improved collaboration with parents (Jugan et al., 2024), and reduced class size (Radojlovic et al., 2022).

In the Greek context, several studies, such as those of Polyzopoulou and Tsakiridou (2023), Sarris et al. (2018), Sakellariou et al. (2018), Galaterou and Antoniou (2017) and Tsakiridou and Polyzopoulou (2014), have included primary teachers alongside educators from other levels. Moreover, studies such as those of Charitaki et al. (2022) and Batsiou et al. (2008) have involved primary teachers from different countries. Among all those studies, primary teachers seem to hold positive attitudes towards Inclusive Education for SEN students (Batsiou et al., 2008; Charitaki et al., 2022; Galaterou & Antoniou, 2017; Polyzopoulou & Tsakiridou, 2023; Sakellariou et al., 2018; Tsakiridou & Polyzopoulou, 2014), although one study found that they were less positive than their pre-primary colleagues (Sarris et al., 2018). Notably, Sakellariou et al. (2018) concluded that primary teachers often lacked the necessary knowledge, skills, and experience to support SEN students, and held neutral views regarding their acceptance by typically developing peers. The study also

highlighted the importance of collaboration between mainstream and special education teachers in inclusive classrooms.

Inclusive Education (Ali et al., 2024; Jugan et al., 2024; O'Leary et al., 2025; UNESCO, 1994) is essential for providing equal learning opportunities to all students, including those with SEN or any other form of diversity. Integrating Inclusive Education approaches in primary education classroom practice is therefore crucial. However, the evidence suggests that primary teachers' perspectives, including their attitudes, knowledge, challenges, and needs, may influence the successful implementation of such educational approaches. The existing studies report varied attitudes toward Inclusive Education for SEN students (Ali et al., 2024; Fu et al., 2021; Jugan et al., 2024; Lindner et al., 2023; Aloka & Mamogobo, 2024; Mantry & Pradhan, 2023; Mishra, 2024; Radojlovic et al., 2022; Uka, 2024; Zhu, 2024), often linked to implementation barriers (Ali et al., 2024; Alsolami & Vaughan, 2023; Dayso et al., 2025; Fu et al., 2021; Jugan et al., 2024; Mantry & Pradhan, 2023; Pov et al., 2024; Radojlovic et al., 2022; Rahmatullayeva, 2025; Siddik, 2025; Zhu, 2024), though other studies lack a primary-specific focus. Across this domain, there is a consistent lack of teacher preparedness, limited pedagogical knowledge (Ali et al., 2024; Jugan et al., 2024; Mantry & Pradhan, 2023; Mishra, 2024; Osman, 2024; Pov et al., 2024; Siddik, 2025; Uka, 2024; Zhu, 2024), and reported challenges relating to institutional support, resources and infrastructure deficits, classroom management difficulties, teacher-, student- and parent-related challenges, and sociocultural barriers (Ali et al., 2024; Alsolami & Vaughan, 2023; Dayso et al., 2025; Fu et al., 2021; Jugan et al., 2024; Mantry & Pradhan, 2023; Pov et al., 2024; Radojlovic et al., 2022; Rahmatullayeva, 2025; Siddik, 2025; Zhu, 2024). These factors may not only hinder the adoption of inclusive practices but also present significant obstacles to their integration to other pedagogical approaches.

This study examines the perspectives of Greek primary school teachers regarding Inclusive Education for SEN students, specifically their attitudes, knowledge, perceived challenges, and support needs. It also maps the research trends relating to these perspectives. By synthesizing the existing national and international literature through a systematic literature review, this study seeks to identify the research gaps, potential barriers, and enablers that affect the effective implementation of the Inclusive Education approach within Greek primary education settings with SEN students.

To achieve this, we conducted a systematic literature review, guided by the following research questions:

RQ1. *What are the publication trends and methodological characteristics of journal articles examining Greek primary teachers' perspectives on Inclusive Education for SEN students?*

RQ2. *What attitudes and perceptions do Greek primary school teachers hold towards Inclusive Education for SEN students, as reported in the literature?*

RQ3. *What is the level, focus, and adequacy of Greek primary school teachers' knowledge in the fields of Inclusive Education for SEN students?*

RQ4. *What challenges and support needs are identified by Greek primary teachers implementing Inclusive Educational approaches in mainstream classrooms with SEN students?*

This systematic literature review contributes significantly to the existing knowledge by offering comprehensive insights into Greek primary teachers' perspectives on Inclusive Education for SEN students. By also identifying and highlighting specific research gaps, this study provides valuable directions for future research, with practical implications for en-

hancing teacher training programs, educational policies, and classroom practices in Greece. Moreover, it aims to inform broader international discussions in this educational field.

The rest of this study is organized as follows: In Section 2, we describe the research method. In Section 3, we present the results, showing how the identified studies address each of the research questions. In Section 4, we discuss the findings of the systematic literature review. In Section 5, we provide this study's limitations and implications for further research. In Section 6, we sum up all the basic points of the current study.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Method

For addressing the research questions of this study, we conducted a systematic literature review following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) Statement (Sarkis-Onofre et al., 2021). PRISMA is a broadly used methodology for the implementation of a systematic literature review, providing a set of well-defined guidelines and specific criteria for the literature selection among scientific databases. The PRISMA flow-diagram phases (identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion) were followed in order to ensure transparency and reproducibility. Moreover, through this approach, the establishment of clear and specific inclusion and exclusion criteria as well as the detailed analysis of the search strategy and of the data extraction and synthesis process contributed to minimizing potential personal biases, providing also the relevance of selected studies.

2.2. Search Strategy

In accordance with the PRISMA Statement methodology, three databases were selected (Scopus, ScienceDirect, ERIC). Moreover, a publisher's website of 471 open access peer-reviewed journals (MDPI) was also selected. The databases and the website were chosen to comprehensively identify relevant articles. Following the selection, keywords were collaboratively determined and agreed upon. One search was conducted within each database and the website, targeting Inclusive Education.

The keywords we selected to use for each search were as follows:

- ““Greek” OR “Greece” AND “teachers” AND “Inclusive Education” AND “disabilities” OR SEN””,

Then, the corresponding author proceeded with the searches in all databases and the website, using the selected keywords. The searches were implemented on 12 April 2025. The type of searches for each database and the website that the corresponding author made is shown in Table 1. Table 1 also shows the results from the application of the first refinement in the results in document type (Journal Article) and language (English). The decision for including exclusively Journal Articles was made in order to ensure the quality and validity of results.

Table 1. Initial results from databases and website.

Database/Website	Type of Search	Inclusive Education Results	Inclusive Education Results After Refinement (Article/Language)
Scopus	Article, title, abstract, keywords	30	25
Science Direct	Title, abstract, keywords	3	3
ERIC	Abstract	15	14
MDPI	All journals	5	5
Total		53	47 *

* The number of articles after refinement.

As depicted in Table 1, thirty (30) results were initially retrieved from the Scopus database, three (3) from the Science Direct database, fifteen (15) from the Eric database, and five (5) from the MDPI website. After the application of the refinement in document type (Journal Article) and language (English), twenty-five (25) articles remained from Scopus database, three (3) from Science Direct database, fourteen (14) from Eric database, and 5 from MDPI website.

Afterwards, the corresponding author made an Excel file with all results and actions. Then, she further refined the results by removing records appearing more than once in the different databases and the website (duplicates). The results can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Results after the exclusion of articles that appeared more than once among the different databases and the selected website.

Database/Website	Inclusive Education Duplicates	Inclusive Education (Remained Articles)
Scopus	0	25
Science Direct	2	1
Eric	7	7
MDPI	1	4
Total	10	37

As a result of the above procedure, thirty-seven (37) articles remained for Inclusive Education. As depicted in Table 2, twenty-five articles remained from Scopus database, one (1) from Science Direct, seven (7) from Eric database, and four (4) from MDPI website.

2.3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Afterwards, the inclusion criteria were decided. These were the following:

- ✓ The articles refer to only in-service primary teachers;
- ✓ The articles refer to Inclusive Education for SEN students;
- ✓ The articles refer to the Greek context.

After the application of the above inclusion criteria, the following exclusion criterion was applied:

- ✓ Articles were excluded if they were purely theoretical, policy-focused, or opinion-based, without presenting original empirical data on Greek primary teachers' perspectives (attitudes, knowledge, challenges, and needs) on Inclusive Education for SEN students.

Consequently, only empirical studies referring to the subjects under study were included.

2.4. Screening Process

For the screening process, the corresponding author started carefully reading the abstracts (and the whole text when needed) of each of the identified articles. Then she applied the three criteria, starting from the first, excluding the articles that according to her opinion did not comply with each criterion. Her decisions were written in the Excel file that was developed at the end of the search process. Furthermore, she applied the exclusion criterion writing down her decisions in the Excel file.

At the end of the first step of the screening process which referred to the application of the first criterion, the corresponding author excluded seventeen (17) articles from the Scopus database, one (1) from the ScienceDirect database, six (6) from the Eric database, and three (3) from MDPI. The results can be shown in Table 3.

As depicted in Table 3, after the application of the first criterion, eight (8) articles remained from the Scopus database, no article (0) remained from Science Direct database,

one (1) article remained from Eric database, and one (1) from the MDPI website. Afterwards, the corresponding author proceeded with the application of the second criterion. At the end of the second step of the screening process, which referred to the application of the second criterion, the corresponding author excluded one (1) article from MDPI. The results can be shown in Table 4.

As depicted in Table 4, after the application of the second criterion, eight (8) articles remained from the Scopus database, one (1) from the Eric database, and no other article remained from the Science Direct database and MDPI website. Finally, at the last step of the screening process, which referred to the application of the third criterion, no other records were excluded from review. Afterwards, the corresponding author retrieved all the reports of the remaining studies and read them carefully, applying in parallel the exclusion criterion. In this case, no other records were excluded following the application of the exclusion criterion.

Then, the second author reviewed the final list of selected articles in order to check their compliance with the selected criteria. The overall screening process is depicted in Figure 1.

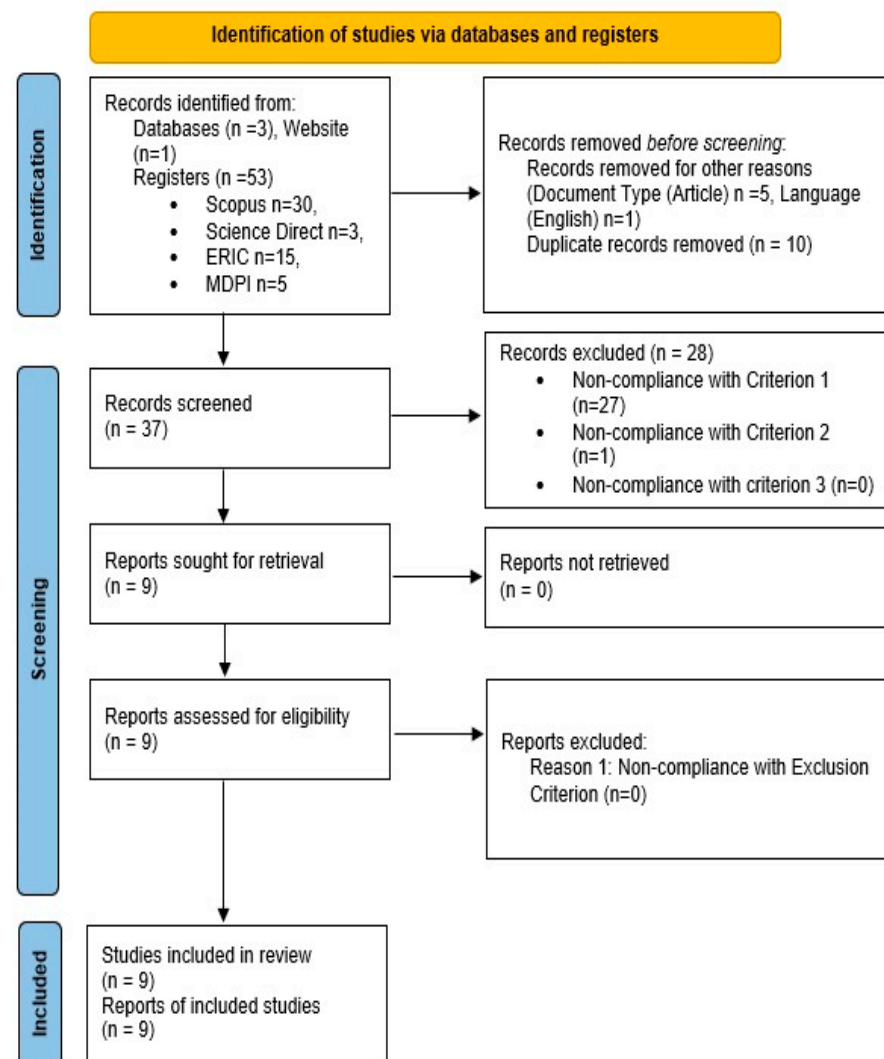


Figure 1. Results from the application of PRISMA Statement.

Table 3. Results after the application of the first criterion.

Database/Website	Inclusive Education Results	Inclusive Education Results After 1st Criterion
Scopus	25	8
Science Direct	1	0
Eric	7	1
MDPI	4	1
Total	37	10

Table 4. Results after the application of the second criterion.

Database/Website	Inclusive Education Results	Inclusive Education Results After 2nd Criterion
Scopus	8	8
Science Direct	0	0
Eric	1	1
MDPI	1	0
Total	10	9

2.5. Data Analysis

After the end of the screening process, the analysis of the selected articles aimed at identifying the characteristics that addressed the research questions outlined in the Introductory section. The data analysis was initially made by the corresponding author, in order to identify, among the selected studies, the data that addressed this study's research questions. In case the studies did not contain data that straightforwardly addressed any of this study's research questions, the associated field of the research question in the Excel file remained empty. Then, she wrote her decisions in the Excel file and reviewed them by cross-checking the identified statements among the original texts of the selected studies. Afterwards, the Excel file was sent to the second author for further review. This review process aimed at limiting the risk of potential individual bias and strengthening the relevance and reliability of findings. Moreover, although no standardized tool was used for assessing the methodological bias, nevertheless, the collaborative decision making through the review process contributed to the identification of data that addressed this study's research questions.

Afterwards the retrieved data from the Excel file were analyzed with the use of quantitative (descriptive analysis and data visualization) and qualitative methods (thematic analysis). For the first case, the corresponding author created tables and then described them using simple statistics. For the qualitative analysis, which focused on data relating to Research Question 4, the six-phase thematic analysis method by [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#) was used. The process began with familiarization through repeated reading of the extracted data and full-text studies. Next, the data were copied into a document, and initial codes were generated using color highlights to group similar content. These codes were then organized into broader themes, which were reviewed and refined in subsequent steps. The final themes were defined and described, and the results were synthesized and presented in the findings section of this article.

3. Results

In this section, we present the results of the data analysis described above. The results are organized into four main sub-sections, each of which refers to one of the research questions mentioned in the Introduction.

3.1. RQ1—What Are the Publication Trends and Methodological Characteristics of Journal Articles Examining Greek Primary Teachers' Perspectives on Inclusive Education for SEN Students?

As illustrated in Figure 1, nine studies ($n = 9$) pertain to Inclusive Education for SEN students, indicating a moderate but still insufficient exploration of particularly primary teachers' perspectives within the Greek education context.

Afterwards, we proceeded with the publication trends and methodological characteristics of the selected articles. Table 5 shows the publication trends and methodological characteristics of the selected articles for Inclusive Education for SEN students.

Starting from the publication trends, as depicted in Table 5, the articles on Inclusive Education for SEN students were published in eight (8) different journals. From those journals, four are specifically dedicated to SEN students (Support for Learning, Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs, International Journal of Disability, Development and Education and European Journal of Special Needs Education). Two more (Teaching and Teacher Education and Open Journal for Educational Research) focus on educational initiatives but not specifically to the inclusion or education of SEN students. Finally, the other two journals (Heliyon and Pastoral Care in Education) refer to multiple disciplines (*physical, applied, life, social, medical sciences, and children's emotional health and wellbeing, evaluations of school-based interventions, reviews of the curriculum, teacher education and professional development, and particular methodological approaches*, accordingly). The diversity of the selected journals shows that half of the research concerning Greek primary teachers' perspectives in Inclusive Education is distributed among different types of journals that do not address Inclusive Education exclusively.

Apart from the distribution of selected articles in different journals, a distribution was also revealed concerning the years of publication of those articles. This distribution is depicted for Inclusive Education in Figure 2.

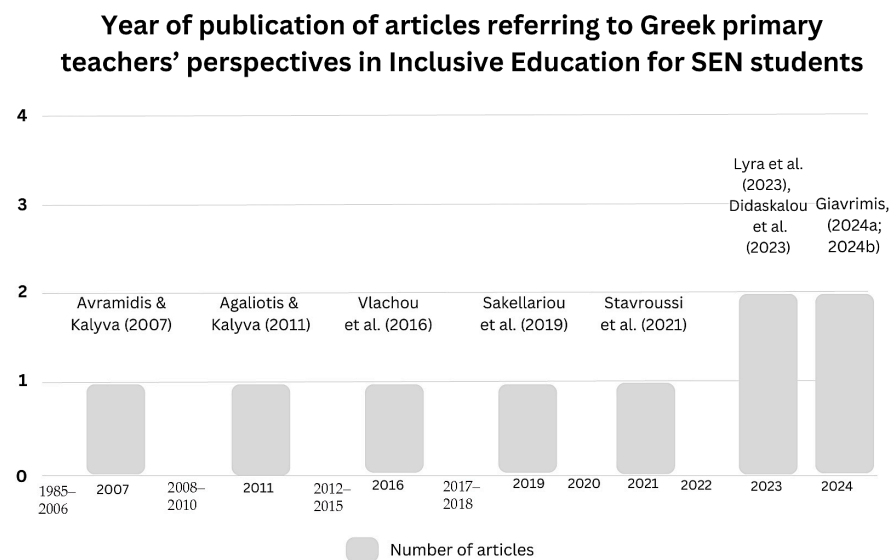


Figure 2. The annual distribution of articles referring to Greek primary teachers' perspectives in Inclusive Education for SEN students (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007; Agaliotis & Kalyva, 2011; Vlachou et al., 2016; Sakellariou et al., 2019; Stavroussi et al., 2021; Lyra et al., 2023; Didaskalou et al., 2023; Giavrimis, 2024a, 2024b).

Table 5. Publication trends and methodological characteristics of retrieved articles for Inclusive Education for SEN students.

Title	Year	Authors	Journal	Sample Size	Sample's Affiliation	Study's Scope	Research Method/Tool(s)	Database
Inclusion classes in Greek education: political and social articulations. An Interpretive phenomenological analysis.	2024	Giavrimis (2024a)	<i>Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs</i>	9	General Education teachers	The study explores the institution of inclusion classes as a supportive educational framework for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) for their inclusion in the mainstream education system through teachers' conceptualizations.	Qualitative method (semi-structured interview)	Scopus
Parallel support as an institution for tackling social and educational inequalities: Functioning and barriers in the Greek education system	2024	Giavrimis (2024b)	<i>Support for learning</i>	12	General Education teachers	The study investigates teachers' views as critical factors in the success of inclusive education on the Parallel Support (PS) institution in Greece and the educational policies implemented.	Qualitative method (semi-structured interview)	Scopus
Fears towards disability and their impact on teaching practices in Inclusive classrooms: An empirical study with teachers in Greece.	2023	Lyra et al. (2023)	<i>Heliyon</i>	15	General and Special Education teachers	The study examines Greek special and general education teachers' fears toward disability and their impact on teaching in inclusive classrooms.	Qualitative method (semi-structured interview)	Scopus
Does primary school teachers' perceived efficacy in classroom management/discipline predict their perceptions of Inclusive Education?	2023	Didaskalou et al. (2023)	<i>Pastoral Care in Education</i>	315	General Education teachers	The study examines the relationships between Greek teachers' perceived efficacy in classroom behavior management/discipline and their perceptions of inclusive education.	Quantitative method (Questionnaire including demographics/personal/professional characteristics part and SACIE-R (Teachers' Sentiments, Attitudes and Concerns about Inclusive Education Revised) and teacher efficacy in classrooms management and discipline scales)	Scopus
Are Teachers' Democratic beliefs about Classroom Life Associated with their perceptions of Inclusive Education?	2021	Stavroussi et al. (2021)	<i>International Journal of Disability, Development and Education</i>	315	General Education teachers	The study examines Greek in-service primary school teachers' perceptions of inclusive education and the extent to which those perceptions are associated with democratic beliefs about classroom life.	Quantitative method (Questionnaire including demographics/personal/professional characteristics part and SACIE-R (Teachers' Sentiments, Attitudes and Concerns about Inclusive Education Revised) and DTBS (Democratic Teachers' Belief Scale) scales)	Scopus

Table 5. Cont.

Title	Year	Authors	Journal	Sample Size	Sample's Affiliation	Study's Scope	Research Method/Tool(s)	Database
Aspects of Greek Teachers Concerning Teaching within Co-Educational Classes: An Exploratory Approach to Elementary School	2019	Sakellariou et al. (2019)	<i>Open Journal for Educational Research</i>	303	General Education teachers	The study examines parameters relating to the co-education between SEN and non-SEN students, drawing conclusions about the attitudes, knowledge, and capability of Greek elementary school teachers regarding inclusive co-education.	Quantitative method (Questionnaire)	Eric
Special Teachers' Educational Responses in Supporting Students with Special educational Needs (SEN) in the domain of Social Skills Development	2016	Vlachou et al. (2016)	<i>International Journal of Disability, Development and Education</i>	40	Special Education teachers	The study examines the responses of Greek Special Education teachers dealing with the difficulties experienced by SEN students in social domain.	Qualitative method (Semi-structured interview)	Scopus
A survey of Greek general and special education teachers' perceptions regarding the role of special needs coordinator: Implications for educational policy on Inclusion and teacher education	2011	Agaliotis and Kalyva (2011)	<i>Teaching and Teacher Education</i>	466	General and Special Education teachers	The study examines the perceptions of Greek general and special primary teachers regarding the role and the professional characteristics of special needs coordinators (SENCOs)	Quantitative method (Questionnaire)	Scopus
The influence of teaching experience and professional development on Greek teachers' attitudes towards Inclusion	2007	Avramidis and Kalyva (2007)	<i>European Journal of Special Needs Education</i>	155	General Education teachers	The study examines primary teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of SEN students in mainstream classrooms and the influence of teaching experience and professional development on their attitudes' formation.	Quantitative method (Questionnaire including demographic section and My Thinking about Inclusion Scale)	Scopus

As illustrated in Figure 2, the annual distribution of articles referring to primary teachers' perspectives (attitudes, knowledge, challenges, or needs) in Inclusive Education for SEN students has as the starting date the year the approach was introduced in the Greek primary education system. Figure 2 shows that most of the research has been published since 2021. In addition, four journal articles have been identified from 2007 until 2020.

Continuing with the methodological characteristics of retrieved studies, the sample characteristics used among the identified and selected studies reveal considerable variation. As depicted in Tables 5 and 6, the most common sample sizes fall into two distinct categories: studies with fewer than 30 participants ($n = 3$) and those with 301–400 participants ($n = 3$ (as the studies (Didaskalou et al., 2023; Stavroussi et al., 2021) are a continuance of one another and for this reason are perceived as one). Moreover, in the studies that fall into the second category (studies with 301–400 participants), the exact geographical distribution of participants is not referenced, with the same issue to exist for the selected study with the biggest sample (>401 participants). In addition, the sample's affiliations are different among the identified studies. In fact, six studies refer only to general teachers, one to special education teachers, and two to both. All those sample characteristics (size, geographical distribution, affiliations) suggest the potential limitations of the current study regarding generalizability.

Table 6. Sample characteristics of retrieved articles for Inclusive Education for SEN students.

Ref.	Sample's Geographical Distribution
(Giavrimis, 2024a)	Greek islands of North Aegean (Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Limnos)
(Giavrimis, 2024b)	Region of North Aegean
(Lyra et al., 2023)	Region of Attica
(Didaskalou et al., 2023)	North and Central Greece
(Stavroussi et al., 2021)	North and Central Greece
(Sakellariou et al., 2019)	Epirus Region
(Vlachou et al., 2016)	Broader Geographical area of Central Greece
(Agaliotis & Kalyva, 2011)	Mainland Greece
(Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007)	One region of Northern Greece

Finally, as for the research methods and tools used, Table 5 reveals a methodological diversity that reflects both qualitative and quantitative research paradigms. The most frequent research method identified was the quantitative method ($n = 5$) with the use of questionnaires. From the five identified studies using such a method, three also integrated scales that have been broadly used in the identification of teachers' perspectives in Inclusive Education-related aspects. One of those scales used in two studies (Didaskalou et al., 2023; Stavroussi et al., 2021) was the SACIE-R (Teachers' Sentiments, Attitudes and Concerns about Inclusive Education-Revised) scale (Forlin et al., 2011). This scale, which was originally designed to measure pre-service teachers' perspectives in Inclusive Education, has also been used in studies involving in-service teachers (Didaskalou et al., 2023). Moreover, the teachers' efficacy in classroom management and discipline scale (Emmer & Hickman, 1991), the Democratic Teachers' Belief (Shechtman, 2002) scale and My Thinking About Inclusion scale (Stoiber et al., 1998) were also used. Finally, in all the qualitative studies, semi-structured interviews were used as a research tool.

3.2. RQ2—What Attitudes and Perceptions Do Greek Primary School Teachers Hold Towards Inclusive Education for SEN Students, as Reported in the Literature?

The findings regarding Greek teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with SEN vary across the studies and over time. Some sources offer only indirect insights,

while others provide more direct evidence. For example, [Lyra et al. \(2023\)](#) reported that both general and special education teachers expressed negative attitudes and emotional discomfort toward disability and the inclusion of SEN students. The same study noted concerns among general educators about their ability to meet SEN students' needs in mainstream classrooms, while special educators questioned the feasibility of effectively supporting students with more severe disabilities in inclusive settings.

In contrast, [Stavroussi et al. \(2021\)](#) found that participating teachers demonstrated generally moderate attitudes toward Inclusive Education and the integration of SEN students in their own classrooms. However, they showed more positive feelings when it came to broader interactions with individuals with disabilities.

A more positive outlook emerged in the study of [Sakellariou et al. \(2019\)](#), where teachers expressed supportive attitudes towards the participation of SEN students in shared activities with their peers. Similarly, [Avramidis and Kalyva \(2007\)](#) reported that teachers held slightly positive views regarding the inclusion of SEN students in mainstream schools.

3.3. RQ3—*What Is the Level, Focus, and Adequacy of Greek Primary School Teachers' Knowledge in the Fields of Inclusive Education for SEN Students?*

This research question aimed to explore the current state of Greek primary school teachers' knowledge regarding Inclusive Education for SEN students, with a focus on both general and special education teachers. The literature reveals a variation in the depth and adequacy of this knowledge, influenced by the type of teacher, the timeframe of the study, and the specific dimensions examined (e.g., legislation, classroom management, and training background).

Starting with the most recent study, [Giavrimis \(2024a\)](#) reported that general teachers were generally aware of the legal obligations and requirements relating to inclusive classrooms in the Greek context. However, the study also pointed to gaps in their training, particularly in addressing issues specific to special education needs (SEN).

[Lyra et al. \(2023\)](#), further highlighted deficiencies in teachers' preparation. General education teachers were found to lack training in inclusive classroom management and in responding effectively to the diverse needs of students with disabilities. Interestingly, even among special education teachers, many of whom held advanced qualifications, from diplomas to doctoral degrees, there was a reported lack of practical experience and applied expertise in working with SEN students.

The studies of [Didaskalou et al. \(2023\)](#) and [Stavroussi et al. \(2021\)](#) confirmed these concerns. Only a small portion of general education teachers reported having substantial training in disability education, while the majority acknowledged either limited or no such training. A similar trend was observed in relation to teachers' knowledge of inclusive education policy and legislation, where many appeared to have only minimal awareness.

[Sakellariou et al. \(2019\)](#) also found that more than half of the participating teachers had limited understanding of SEN- and disability-related issues. A notable proportion of respondents reported a complete lack of awareness in this area.

An exception to these patterns was reported by [Vlachou et al. \(2016\)](#), where all participating special education teachers had formal qualifications in special education. However, in the earlier study by [Avramidis and Kalyva \(2007\)](#), most participants, particularly those in general education, had not received any formal training relating to SEN. Those who had were typically limited to short-term professional development courses.

3.4. RQ4—What Specific Challenges and Support Needs Are Identified for Greek Primary Teachers Implementing Inclusive Educational Approaches in Mainstream Classroom with SEN Students?

For this question, the data retrieved from identified studies, initially for teachers' challenges, were thematically analyzed and distributed in seven broad thematic categories. The results of this analysis are depicted in Table 7.

Table 7. Thematic categories, codes, and statements for Greek primary teachers' challenges.

Thematic Category	Codes	Statements
Teacher-related constraints	Teachers' insufficient training	"Lack of full training of teachers working in the ICs (inclusive classrooms) and lack of training and feedback from SEN co-ordinators" (general teachers) (Giavrimis, 2024a, p. 6)
		"Insufficient training of teachers in Inclusive Education" (general teachers) (Giavrimis, 2024b, p. 137)
		"Lack of training in Inclusive classroom management" (general teachers) (Lyra et al., 2023, p. 8)
		"Lack of adequate training (in strategies for SEN students' social skills development)" (special teachers) (Vlachou et al., 2016, p. 88)
	Teachers' insufficient knowledge	"Limited knowledge of the special education field" (general teachers) (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007, p. 382)
Teachers' attitudes	"Children attending IC may not participate in initiatives because teachers do not encourage them" (general teachers) (Giavrimis, 2024a, p. 7)	
	"Teachers' attitudes" (general teachers) (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007, p. 383)	
Teachers' experience	"Lack of experience of Inclusion" (general teachers) (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007, p. 382)	
Teachers' fears	"Lack of experience (a) in planning, (b) in time management in co-teaching and, (c) in differentiated teaching" (general teachers) (Lyra et al., 2023, p. 7)	
	"General education teachers talked about fundamental fears that touch upon their self-awareness and role" (general teachers) (Lyra et al., 2023, p. 8)	
	"Fear of being exposed as not skilled enough or not effective enough in the eyes of their colleague" (special teachers) (Lyra et al., 2023, p. 9)	
	"Fear of having more than one student with severe disabilities" (special teachers) (Lyra et al., 2023, p. 9)	
Resources and infrastructure	Teaching materials and resources	"Severe shortage of educational material. . . computer, Internet connection, educational games, cards, posters, etc." (general teachers) (Giavrimis, 2024a, p. 6) "Lack of differentiated learning material. . . no differentiated exercises in books" (general teachers) (Lyra et al., 2023, p. 7)
	Physical infrastructure	"Lack of appropriate facilities both in mainstream and even in special education schools (e.g., ramps for children with mobility disabilities) and technological support for children who may be visually or hearing disabled" (general teachers) (Giavrimis, 2024b, p. 143) "Lack of infrastructure. . . ramps, adequate architectural and spatial adjustments of classrooms, elevators" (general and special teachers) (Lyra et al., 2023, p. 7)
Curriculum, time, and other systemic constraints	Curriculum	"The curriculum is very demanding. . . it is difficult for children with SEND and everyone else" (general teachers) (Giavrimis, 2024b, p. 144) "There was no curriculum (for Inclusive classrooms) for children with special educational needs" (general teachers) (Giavrimis, 2024b, p. 144) "The expectations for covering defined areas of the curriculum, (make) teachers feel stressed to achieve goals that concern mainly academic skills within a strict timeframe" (special teachers) (Lyra et al., 2023, p. 7) "Pressure to focus on SEN students' academic skills (i.e., reading, writing, arithmetic) at the expense of other domains of development" (special teachers) (Vlachou et al., 2016, p. 88)
		Time/Workload constraints

Table 7. Cont.

Thematic Category	Codes	Statements
	Government/Schools	<p>"With the institution of Parallel Support for a child with SEND, the state is reassured and believes it has no other 'responsibility'" (general teachers) (Giavrimis, 2024b, p. 143)</p> <p>"The frequent displacement of teachers (many teachers work as substitutes) causes even more problems" (general teachers) (Giavrimis, 2024b, p. 143)</p> <p>"Lack of SEN teachers" (general teachers) (Giavrimis, 2024a, p. 6)</p> <p>"The continuous rearrangements that the Ministry of Education introduces. . . As. . . pointed out, over the last decades, it hasn't been an unusual practice for Greek governments to revise or interrupt introduced rearrangements and new educational policies within short periods of time" (special teachers) (Lyra et al., 2023, p. 8)</p> <p>"Insufficient support from schools and local communities" (general teachers) (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007, p. 382)</p>
Collaboration constraints	Limited/Absent collaboration	<p>"collaboration between mainstream teachers and IC teachers. . . is only sometimes given" (general teachers) (Giavrimis, 2024a, p. 6)</p> <p>"Limited opportunities for collaboration" (general teachers) (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007, pp. 382–383)</p>
	Culture of collaboration	"Teachers tend to be negative towards collaborative teaching, mainly due to issues of 'ownership' and leadership within the classroom" (special teachers) (Lyra et al., 2023, p. 8)
SEN student-related barriers	SEN students' behavior	"Offensive, violent or infringing behavior of SEN students" (general teachers) (Lyra et al., 2023, p. 6)
	SEN students' potential	<p>"General education teachers expressed their concerns regarding specific SEN students' potential (e.g., students with severe mental disabilities) to learn effectively in an inclusive class" (general teachers) (Lyra et al., 2023, p. 6)</p> <p>"Special education teachers also expressed their uncertainties in respect to whether SEN students can successfully attend the mainstream school. As reasons, they stated the severity of SEN" (special teachers) (Lyra et al., 2023, p. 6)</p>
Typical student-related barriers	Typical students' reactions	"Typical students' reactions to offensive, violent or infringing behavior of SEN students" (general teachers) (Lyra et al., 2023, p. 6)
	Typical students' attitudes	"Children do not participate in the school's social life because of their challenges or adverse treatment from classmates" (general teachers) (Giavrimis, 2024a, p. 7)
Parent-related barriers	SEN students' parent-related barriers	<p>"Families with low economic and educational backgrounds need more financial and educational capital to help their children effectively. Most students attending ICs come from low social strata, and their families struggle to provide them with the needed help" (general teachers) (Giavrimis, 2024a, p. 8)</p> <p>"The loose family structure makes it challenging to deal with children's learning difficulties" (general teachers) (Giavrimis, 2024a, p. 8)</p> <p>"Some parents cannot accept the difficulties (of their SEND children)" (general teachers) (Giavrimis, 2024a, p. 8)</p>
	Typical students' parent-related barriers	<p>"However, parents often do not accept students attending IC and interfere, even during school hours. They fear that their children's school performance will be affected or that there will be issues with SEND children's behaviour" (general teachers) (Giavrimis, 2024a, p. 7)</p> <p>"Parental (of typical students) attitudes" (general teachers) (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007, p. 382)</p>

As depicted in Table 7, the first thematic category identified was that of teacher-related constraints. This category included the sub-themes of training, knowledge, attitudes, experience, and fears. Starting from training and knowledge, among the different studies general teachers revealed as barriers for the inclusion of SEN students the lack of training in inclusive education (Giavrimis, 2024a, 2024b; Lyra et al., 2023) and their lack of knowledge in special education (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007). Moreover, special education teachers identified as challenging their lack of training in strategies for SEN students' skills development (Vlachou et al., 2016). Teachers' attitudes and experiences could also create barriers to the successful inclusion of SEN students, according to general teachers' perspectives (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007; Giavrimis, 2024a; Lyra et al., 2023). More specifically, and concerning experiences, the lack of teachers' experience in different aspects of co-teaching and inclusive education can prevent them from both co-teaching and inclusion of SEN students (Lyra et al., 2023). Finally, in this thematic category, fears seem to be a more common challenge for special educators than for general educators (Lyra et al., 2023). In

fact, special educators reported fears of being exposed to their colleagues as not being skilled or effective enough. They also feared change in having more than one student with a severe SEN type. Fear was also stated from general education teachers as well, in the aspects of their self-awareness and roles.

The second identified thematic category referred to Resources and Infrastructure. In this category, all teachers (general, special) reported significant barriers for inclusion (Giavrimis, 2024a, 2024b; Lyra et al., 2023). The limitations of physical accessibility (ramps) (Giavrimis, 2024a, 2024b; Lyra et al., 2023) were mainly reported. In addition, general education teachers highlighted the shortage of educational materials (Giavrimis, 2024a) and absence of differentiated learning materials (Lyra et al., 2023), accordingly. The third identified thematic category referred to curriculum, time, and other systematic constraints. In this category, several barriers were identified. Starting from the barriers concerning the curriculum, special education teachers reported difficulties in covering the curriculum (Lyra et al., 2023) and pressure to focus on SEN students' academic skills (Lyra et al., 2023; Vlachou et al., 2016). Moreover, the absence of a curriculum for SEN students for inclusive classrooms and the demanding nature of the existing curricula were stated by other general teachers (Giavrimis, 2024b). Furthermore, time and workload seem to be a significant barrier for inclusion for both general (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007; Lyra et al., 2023) and special teachers (Lyra et al., 2023; Vlachou et al., 2016). In addition, state-related barriers to inclusion were reported from both general and special teachers. The lack of SEN teachers and the frequent displacement of teachers seem to create barriers in the proper implementation of Inclusive Education (Giavrimis, 2024b). Moreover, the continuous change in educational policies concerning inclusion within short periods of time was reported as challenging for special education teachers (Lyra et al., 2023). Furthermore, general education teachers reported as challenging the insufficient support from schools and local communities (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007).

Continuing with the fourth thematic category, this refers to collaboration constraints. In this category, general education teachers (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007; Giavrimis, 2024a) reported as barriers the insufficient collaboration between them and the special education teachers, as well as the limited opportunities for collaboration accordingly. Moreover, special education teachers reported challenges referring to their collaboration with general education teachers (Lyra et al., 2023). The fifth thematic category identified referred to the SEN student-related barriers. In this category, the behavioral problems of SEN students seem to be challenging for general educators (Lyra et al., 2023). Moreover, the severity of SEN students' disabilities seems to become an obstacle for their inclusion, for both general and special education teachers (Lyra et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the sixth thematic category refers to typical student-related barriers. In this category, concerns about typical students' reactions and attitudes towards SEN students were reported from general teachers. Finally, in the last category, barriers referring to parents of SEN and non-SEN students were reported. More specifically, the socioeconomic background of the families of SEN students, as well as the non-acceptance of students' problems seem to influence inclusion, according to general teachers (Giavrimis, 2024a). Moreover, the reactions or attitudes of the parents of non-SEN students is another barrier to inclusion, according to the general teachers (Giavrimis, 2024a; Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007).

Continuing with the identified data concerning primary teachers' needs, these were also thematically analyzed and distributed in three thematic categories. The results of this analysis are depicted in Table 8.

Table 8. Thematic categories, codes, and statements for Greek primary teachers' needs.

Thematic Category	Codes	Statements
Collaboration and support	Collaboration	<p>"The collaboration of (mainstream/parallel support) teachers needs to be at the required level to produce better learning outcomes" (general teachers) (Giavrimis, 2024b, p. 143)</p> <p>"Participants reported that there should be a collaboration between all staff, which could make things better" (general teachers) (Giavrimis, 2024b, p. 143)</p>
	Additional teaching staff	<p>"All teachers mentioned the need for more teaching staff (special education teachers, nurses, ergo therapists, and psychologists)" (general teachers) (Giavrimis, 2024b, p. 143)</p> <p>"Teachers opt for pastoral help by the parallel support educator as being the factor of uttermost importance" (general teachers) (Sakellariou et al., 2019, p. 113)</p> <p>"Both general and special educators believe that each Greek school should have a fulltime SENCO" (Special Needs Coordinator) (general and special teachers) (Agaliotis & Kalyva, 2011, p. 547)</p>
	Collaborative networks	<p>"Teachers focused on the need to create collaborative networks with regular education teachers, parents and especially external agencies such as psychological community-based services" (special education teachers) (Vlachou et al., 2016, p. 89)</p> <p>"Need of collaborative relationships with university staff" (general teachers)" (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007, p. 383)</p> <p>"Consultation with teachers, specialists and parents" (general teachers) (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007, p. 383)</p> <p>"Group discussions on inclusion practicalities" (general teachers) (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007, p. 383)</p>
Teachers' traits	Teachers' behaviors	<p>"All the participants stressed the catalytic importance of teachers' behavior in socializing students attending IC" (general teachers) (Giavrimis, 2024a, p. 7)</p>
	Teachers' experience	<p>"High or even limited experience in teaching students with disabilities (compared to those with no experience), and those having interactions with people with disabilities, reported more positive overall perceptions of inclusive education" (general teachers) (Didaskalou et al., 2023, p. 10)</p> <p>"Need for direct teaching experiences with pupils with SEN" (general teachers) (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007, p. 383)</p> <p>"Need for observation of other teachers in inclusive settings" (general teachers) (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007, p. 383)</p> <p>"Exposition to children with SEN" (general teachers) (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007, p. 383)</p>
	Teachers' beliefs	<p>"Participants' democratic beliefs about schooling, and specifically their Classroom Life Beliefs, were found to be strongly associated with their overall perceptions of inclusive education" (general teachers) (Stavroussi et al., 2021, p. 638)</p>
	Teachers' training	<p>"Teachers with high levels of training in disabilities education, compared to those with no training at all, reported more positive overall perceptions of inclusive education" (general education teachers) (Didaskalou et al., 2023, p. 10)</p> <p>"In-service training" (general teachers) (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007, p. 383)</p> <p>"Attending courses at the University" (general teachers) (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007, p. 383)</p>
	Teachers' abilities	<p>"Teachers' abilities of dealing with SEN students' behavioral problems" (general teachers) (Sakellariou et al., 2019, p. 113)</p>
Curriculum needs	Curriculum reform	<p>"Need for modifications in the curriculum" (general teachers) (Sakellariou et al., 2019, p. 113)</p>

As depicted in Table 8, the first thematic broad category refers to collaboration and support. In this category, the collaboration among all staff and of the mainstream and parallel support teachers is stated (Giavrimis, 2024b). A parallel support teacher is a special education teacher who supports exclusively a SEN student in a general mainstream classroom (Giavrimis, 2024b). His/her presence is important for general teachers, as stated in another study (Sakellariou et al., 2019). Moreover, the need for more special education staff was also stated (Giavrimis, 2024b). Concerning the additional staff, general and special education teachers indicated the need for a full time Special Needs Coordinator (Agaliotis & Kalyva, 2011). The Special Needs Coordinator is a highly specialized in special education teacher who has more broadened responsibilities than general and special educators concerning the holistic support of SEN students (Agaliotis & Kalyva, 2011). This Coordinator supports general and special education teachers as well, and for this reason their presence, along with their preferable responsibilities, are stated by participants. Apart from the need for specialized staff, general (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007) and special (Vlachou et al., 2016) education teachers reported the need for the development of collaborative frameworks for inclusion, with teachers, specialists, parents, external agencies (such as psychological-based services), and university staff.

The second thematic category refers to needs concerning teachers' traits. In this category, teachers' positive behaviors towards SEN students are important for the success of inclusion according to general teachers (Giavrimis, 2024a). Moreover, the necessity of teachers' experience in teaching students with SEN is reported by authors (Didaskalou et al., 2023) and general teachers (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007) as well. For gaining experience, general education teachers also stated the need to observe other teachers in inclusive settings (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007). Moreover, general teachers' democratic beliefs about classrooms life seem also to be catalysts of teachers' perceptions of Inclusive Education (Stavroussi et al., 2021). Moreover, the need for training was highlighted by general teachers in two studies (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007; Didaskalou et al., 2023). Furthermore, general teachers revealed as a need the strengthening of their abilities in dealing with SEN students' behavioral problems. In addition, in the third thematic category, referring to the curriculum, general teachers presented needs for modifications in the curriculum (Sakellariou et al., 2019).

4. Discussion

In this study, we presented a systematic literature review investigating Greek primary teachers' perspectives (attitudes, knowledge, challenges, needs) in Inclusive Education for SEN students and related research trends.

The analysis conducted for the first research question focused on mapping the research trends of existing peer-reviewed journal articles addressing Inclusive Education in Greek primary education mainstream classrooms with SEN students. The overall number of studies identified was limited, suggesting that the topic remains moderately explored but still underrepresented in the academic literature, particularly when it comes to the perspectives of primary school teachers. Although Inclusive Education has been established in Greek educational policy for several years, the concentration of relevant publications only increased noticeably after 2021, indicating a relatively recent surge in research interest. This trend likely reflects both growing policy attention and the evolving challenges of implementing inclusive practices in mainstream classrooms. The reviewed articles were published across a diverse set of journals, ranging from those dedicated specifically to special education to broader educational or interdisciplinary outlets. Notably, half of the studies appeared in journals not exclusively focused on Inclusive Education or SEN, which may affect the visibility and coherence of this research area. Methodologically, both quali-

tative and quantitative approaches were represented. However, the variability in sample sizes, affiliations, and lack of detailed geographical coverage in several studies presents limitations in terms of generalizability. In particular, few studies provided comprehensive insights into the everyday realities of teachers working in diverse school settings across Greece. Moreover, the chronological gaps between the identified studies may hinder a comprehensive understanding of how primary teachers' perspectives have evolved over time, thereby limiting the development of timely and targeted support measures.

Four out of nine identified studies from the systematic literature review addressed the Greek primary teachers' attitudes towards Inclusive Education for SEN students. Of those studies, those two studies that were published in the last five years reported negative teachers' attitudes towards disability (Lyra et al., 2023) and moderate teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of SEN students (Stavroussi et al., 2021). The second result is in accordance with the results of the most recent systematic literature review spanning Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America, showing neutral or ambivalent views in primary teachers' attitudes (Lindner et al., 2023). Moreover, the first result is in accordance with the result of other foreign research studies that are based on almost the same number of participants (Ali et al., 2024; Alsolami & Vaughan, 2023; Fu et al., 2021). Nevertheless, it is not consistent with the general positiveness in primary teachers' attitudes, identified in most of the studies referring to Greek primary teachers among other teachers (Batsiou et al., 2008; Charitaki et al., 2022; Galaterou & Antoniou, 2017; Polyzopoulou & Tsakiridou, 2023; Sakellariou et al., 2018; Tsakiridou & Polyzopoulou, 2014) or primary teachers of other countries (Jugan et al., 2024; Aloka & Mamogobo, 2024; Mantry & Pradhan, 2023; Mishra, 2024; Radojlovic et al., 2022; Zhu, 2024). The differences in the attitudes of primary teachers between our study and other Greek or international studies could have a possible explanation. The differences between the results of our study with the results reported in studies that concern other countries could lie in the educational systems that each country has. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the current systematic literature review showed that Greek primary teachers initially held positive attitudes towards Inclusive Education. That positiveness started falling to neutral and then to negative levels through the years. For identifying explanations of this potential shift in attitudes, we further examined in the current study the parameters of Greek primary teachers' knowledge, challenges, and needs.

Concerning Greek primary teachers' knowledge about Inclusive Education for SEN students, seven out of nine identified studies referred to this topic. In almost all the identified studies, Greek primary teachers presented a lack of knowledge in special education fields (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007; Didaskalou et al., 2023; Lyra et al., 2023; Sakellariou et al., 2019; Stavroussi et al., 2021). Moreover, in one study, special education primary teachers reported as having high qualifications but also a feeling of lack of expertise in the domain of SEN (Lyra et al., 2023). The lack of primary teachers' knowledge in Inclusive/Special Education was also underlined in most of the studies identified at the international level (Ali et al., 2024; Fu et al., 2021; Mantry & Pradhan, 2023; Mishra, 2024; Osman, 2024; Siddik, 2025; Zhu, 2024). It was also stated in one study that included Greek primary teachers in the sample (Sakellariou et al., 2018). Moreover, the insufficiency of teachers' training was reported in the other three international studies (Jugan et al., 2024; Siddik, 2025; Uka, 2024). Since 2008, in Greece, teachers who teach SEN students are obliged to have specific qualifications in special education (one of either a diploma in Special Education, Master's Degree, Doctoral). Nevertheless, the fact that in one study, special education primary teachers reported a lack of expertise in the fields of SEN leaves implications about the potential gaps in existing training programs that address the Inclusive/Special Education fields. Despite such gaps in formal education provided by HEIs, another legislation gap exists in Greece and has the potential to contribute to primary teachers' lack of knowledge. In fact, although

the qualifications of teachers who will exclusively teach SEN students (either in special schools, or as parallel supports) have been clearly stated, this does not happen in the case of Inclusive Education. Consequently, all teachers, regardless of qualifications in special education, can teach in inclusive classrooms with SEN students. This gap in policies can lead to gaps in primary teachers' qualifications and explain the lack of knowledge reported by various general teachers.

Continuing with Greek primary teachers' challenges in Inclusive Education for SEN students, five out of nine studies addressed such an aspect. In this case, through the thematic analysis we implemented, seven broad categories were identified. In the first category referring to teacher-related constraints, parameters such as the teachers' insufficient training, knowledge, attitudes, experiences, and fears were identified. In this category, we had challenges reported by general and special education teachers. Challenges in this category are in accordance with the findings from the international literature across diverse educational contexts (Alsolami & Vaughan, 2023; Dayso et al., 2025; Fu et al., 2021; Aloka & Mamogobo, 2024; Mantry & Pradhan, 2023; Rahmatullayeva, 2025; Siddik, 2025). For instance, Jugan et al. (2024), Uka (2024), and Siddik (2025) reported that even trained teachers often felt unprepared to support SEN students in inclusive classrooms, while Rahmatullayeva (2025) and Siddik (2025) noted that fears of failure and self-efficacy were significant barriers to implementation. The fact that the current systematic literature review revealed that teachers reported all those personal attributes as challenges to inclusion shows a significant level of self-awareness among Greek teachers.

The second identified category of teachers' challenges refers to the absence or shortage of resources and infrastructures needed for the proper implementation of Inclusive Education. This category also involved challenges for both special and general education teachers. Primary teachers' challenges concerning resources and infrastructure were also reported in other studies (Ali et al., 2024; Alsolami & Vaughan, 2023; Dayso et al., 2025; Fu et al., 2021; Mantry & Pradhan, 2023; Pov et al., 2024; Radojlovic et al., 2022; Rahmatullayeva, 2025; Siddik, 2025). Nevertheless, in this case, it is worth mentioning that resources are referred as a challenge only for general primary teachers. This can be explained by the fact that special education teachers in Greece do not have specialized books for SEN students and are used to designing content for their lessons. In contrast, general education teachers struggle, according to Rahmatullayeva (2025), with the lack of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and the existence of outdated and inaccessible teaching materials, presenting problems in adapting content to SEN students' needs and providing differentiated instruction (DI). On the other hand, the lack of physical infrastructure was revealed as a challenge for both general and special education teachers, showing existing gaps in schools concerning accessibility. As Siddik (2025) noted, these infrastructural gaps are more obvious in rural schools, which are often underequipped.

Continuing with the third thematic category referring to curriculum, time, and other systemic constraints and in this category, we have challenges for both general, and special teachers. Starting from the curriculum, we should say that challenges in this domain are reported by other studies as well (Jugan et al., 2024; Mantry & Pradhan, 2023; Rahmatullayeva, 2025). Nevertheless, we should mention that in our study, covering defined areas of the curriculum is mostly a challenge for special educators. This finding differs from those of Jugan et al. (2024), Mantry and Pradhan (2023), and Rahmatullayeva (2025), where general teachers were cited as struggling with inflexible curricula and curricula adaptations. This can be explained by differences in role expectations and the system structure. In Greece, special education teachers straightforwardly address SEN students and are the main people responsible for curriculum modifications in most of the cases. As a result, they are more likely to report these challenges. In contrast, in many international

contexts, general education teachers are expecting to take a more active role in curriculum adaptations, which may explain the emphasis on this challenge in the international literature. Continuing with time and workload challenges, these were also reported by other studies (Jugan et al., 2024; Pov et al., 2024; Siddik, 2025). Such challenges, reported by both general and special teachers, show the difficult nature of Inclusive Education. Finally for this category, challenges concerning general and special education teachers' support from Greek governments and schools were also reported. Such challenges have also been identified in other international studies (Mantry & Pradhan, 2023; Rahmatullayeva, 2025; Siddik, 2025). The lack of special education staff and the absence of effective policies appear as common challenges reported by primary teachers across different educational systems, while resistance to Inclusive Education among staff was mentioned in only one international study (Siddik, 2025). Moreover, the lack of local communities' support was reported in the studies of Rahmatullayeva (2025) and Dayso et al. (2025), where biases and cultural perceptions of disability and diversity were identified as barriers. The latter highlights the critical influence of community attitudes to the proper implementation of Inclusive Education for SEN students.

Furthermore, and concerning collaboration, limited/absent or problematic collaboration among all teachers involved in inclusive classrooms were reported by both general and special teachers. Those challenges were in accordance with another study referring to Greek primary teachers among others in the sample (Sakellariou et al., 2018) and one international study (Dayso et al., 2025). The primary teachers' challenges identified by the current study concerning SEN students' behaviors, typical students' attitudes and behaviors, and typical and SEN students' parents' attitudes and behaviors were identified in other studies as well ((Jugan et al., 2024), (Ali et al., 2024; Radojlovic et al., 2022; Zhu, 2024) and (Ali et al., 2024; Fu et al., 2021; Radojlovic et al., 2022; Zhu, 2024) accordingly). Moreover, the study of Siddik (2025) adds one new parameter, reporting the hesitance of SEN students' parents to enroll their children in mainstream classrooms, due to fears of social exclusion or perceived limitations. Apart from SEN student-related challenges, all the others (including SEN students' parent-related barriers) seem to concern mainly the general teachers. The barriers referring to typical students and their parents, could be explained by the fact that general teachers are used to mainly address and feel responsible for this population. Nevertheless, Didaskalou et al. (2023), who have also underlined teachers' tendency to consider students' and families' issues as barriers to inclusion, provided another explanation. According to them, such teachers' tendency has consequences for them in presenting limited willingness for improvement of strategies and development of support mechanisms for SEN students in inclusive classrooms. This statement implied that teachers tend to transfer their own difficulties to others, justifying in this way their resistance to including SEN students.

Finally, relating to Greek primary teachers' needs in Inclusive Education for SEN students, our thematic analysis revealed three main categories of needs concerning collaboration and support, teachers' traits (such as behaviors, experiences, beliefs, training, and abilities) and curriculum. Starting from the first category, the need for the presence, collaboration, and assistance of general teachers by special educators was also presented in the background studies (Jugan et al., 2024; Mishra, 2024; Radojlovic et al., 2022; Zhu, 2024). This could have two possible explanations. The first is that general teachers need support in inclusive classrooms, because of their lack of knowledge or self-efficacy in inclusive teaching. The other could be their possible perception that SEN students are the responsibility of special educators. This became apparent from the study of Agaliotis and Kalyva (Agaliotis & Kalyva, 2011), in which both general and special education teachers wanted another teacher to have full responsibility for the SEN students and different aspects referring to them. Moreover, the need for collaborative networks such as this with parents was also

underlined in another study (Jugan et al., 2024). This could be a need for primary teachers to learn more about their SEN students in order to better understand and support them. Continuing with the second thematic category, the need for teachers' ongoing training was reported by other studies as well (Jugan et al., 2024; Mantry & Pradhan, 2023; Siddik, 2025; Zhu, 2024). This is explained by the lack of teachers' knowledge in special education fields, reported from almost all studies. Finally, curriculum needs were also reported by the background studies found (Mishra, 2024; Radojlovic et al., 2022). This further indicates primary teachers' need for support from Ministries of Education through the provision of guidelines on how to teach in inclusive classrooms.

5. Limitations and Further Research

Despite its contributions, the current study presents several limitations. The first limitation refers to the small number of identified studies. The second limitation refers to the sample size among the selected studies. Such size, which was in almost half the cases under 100 participants, does not allow us to make safe comparisons among the different studies. Finally, the last limitation refers to the different tools used among the different studies, which also prevents us from drawing safe conclusions.

Apart from those limitations, the current study revealed significant gaps that merit further research. The first gap concerns the absence of nation-wide research concerning Greek primary teachers' perspectives in Inclusive Education for SEN students. The second gap stems from the fact that special primary education teachers' perspectives concerning Inclusive Education for SEN students are still under researched. Finally, this study revealed a gap in the systematic investigation of both general and special education teachers' needs in Inclusive Education for SEN students in the international journal literature.

Future research should aim to address these gaps through large-scale, representative studies that include both general and special primary education teachers from various regions of Greece. An emphasis should be placed on using standardized research instruments to allow for comparability across studies. Moreover, exploring teachers' training needs, professional development opportunities, and school-level support structures would provide valuable insights for policy and practice. Longitudinal research could also help trace how teachers' attitudes, knowledge, and competences in Inclusive Education for SEN students evolve over time, contributing to more targeted and sustainable inclusion strategies in the Greek education system.

6. Conclusions

This systematic literature review explored Greek primary teachers' perspectives on Inclusive Education for SEN students, focusing on their attitudes, knowledge, challenges, and needs and related research trends. Despite Inclusive Education being a long-standing component of Greek educational policy, the findings reveal that identified research addressing the perspectives of primary school teachers remains limited in scope and consistency. Teachers' attitudes towards Inclusive Education for SEN students appear to have shifted over time, from positive to more neutral or even negative, raising questions about the systemic and contextual factors influencing this change. A key contributing factor is the consistently reported lack of knowledge and training in Special Education, even among qualified special education teachers, which points to possible shortcomings in teacher education programs and policy gaps concerning inclusive teaching assignments. The review also identified several systemic and practical challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, insufficient collaboration, inconsistent support from schools and authorities, and concerns about curriculum demands and workload. Notably, teachers often expressed concerns about their preparedness, the behavior and learning potential of

SEN students, as well as the attitudes of peers, families, and the broader school community. These challenges reveal the complexity of inclusive teaching and the need for coordinated long-term support mechanisms. Finally, this study highlighted key needs expressed by teachers: stronger collaboration frameworks, presence of specialized staff, practical training opportunities, and clearer curricular guidance. These needs reflect a widespread demand for targeted, context-sensitive support that can strengthen both teacher competences and the overall inclusiveness of Greek primary schools.

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