

## ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT OF RISKS TO TEACHERS WORKING WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS STUDENTS IN A SELECTED EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

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**Purpose:** Students with special educational needs (SEN) may exhibit difficult behaviour in school, disturbing the learning environment, which gives rise to management problems for those involved in their education. In light of the current approach, special-needs education in Poland should be a high-quality educational service that provides for the specific needs of students with disabilities in terms of teaching organisation and methods. Work with SEN students places teachers at a great professional risk. This may lead to stress, job burnout or the experience of intensive emotional stimulation from SEN students. This paper is intended to explore risks to teachers working with special educational needs students in a selected educational institution.

**Design/methodology/approach:** A survey to determine risks to teachers working with special educational needs students was carried out at the turn of September and October 2023. It was completed electronically by 42 SEN teachers. The survey addressed the issues of qualifications to work with SEN students, fears of finding fulfilment in a SEN school environment, and risks to teachers in SEN children's behaviour, among other things. The SEN teachers were also asked about their institution's readiness for working with SEN students.

**Findings:** The responses given in the survey showed the SEN teachers were generally satisfied with their work. More than 90% have no fears of finding fulfilment in their SEN children environment. More than 95% believe the institution they work at is well adapted to working with SEN students. In spite of the satisfaction and absence of fears, 59.5% SEN teachers have experienced verbal and non-verbal aggression from SEN students.

**Research limitations/implications:** Such research helps to make teachers' work with SEN children more efficient and safer.

**Practical implications:** The study implies such research is reasonable as it obtains reliable information from teachers about what problems and events may be encountered when working with SEN students.

**Originality/value:** The conclusions show how important the preparation for work with SEN students is. Pedagogic qualifications are insufficient, continuous improvement through training or workshops as well as contacts with other teachers from similar institutions, especially those with long experience, are important as well.

**Keywords:** occupational health and safety; oligophrenic pedagogy; occupational risk; educational needs; risk management.

**Category of the paper:** Research paper.

## 1. Introduction

The psycho-social stress of teachers is increasingly described and recognised in specialist literature. It's also controversial in the context of the ongoing debate about the need to preserve the special status of this professional group under the Teachers' Charter.

The role of special-needs teachers in identifying and teaching special-needs students is larger than ever (Vaughugh et al., 2010). The teaching practices and methods must be appropriate and the procedures must comply with legal requirements (Key Issues for Policy and Practice, European Agency for Development In Special Needs Education, 2007).

Educating SEN students has become an integral part of the whole education system (Kulesza, 2007). Working with developmental disability persons is difficult and those carrying it out must meet a range of requirements. Matthews (2009) identifies some potential requirements which happen not be fulfilled by teachers, including the lack of preparation, fear of students' 'hidden' disorders, lack of awareness students need additional support or attention when learning. Special-needs teachers adjust curricula to students' learning styles, address changes in educational policies, and assure safety to SEN students (the OJ of 2017, item 59). Special-needs teachers are a high-risk group suffering from low job satisfaction, a low sense of their own effectiveness, enhanced stress, and burnout (Twist, Montgomery, 2010).

Bobińska and Galecki (2010) point out the risk of psychic disorders in the mentally disabled is three to four times greater than in those developing normally. Aggression, self-mutilation, anger attacks, binges, escapes from home, abnormal sexual behaviors, obsession, and stereotypes are the most common behavioural disorders in that group. Dyer and Quinn (1998) claim certain behaviours of SEN students, such as communication problems or self-mutilation, are major sources of stress and may lead to workers' burnouts. Job burnout is seen as a psychological syndrome in response to chronic work-related stressors (Maslach et al., 2001) and a complex symptom of emotional exhaustion, personality loss, and reduced job satisfaction.

This paper is intended to explore risks to teachers working with SEN students in a selected educational institution. A survey was conducted among special-needs teachers at a Special Purpose School and Education Centre in the Mazovian region.

## 2. Material and methods

A survey questionnaire served to assess the attitudes of and risks to teachers in the selected educational institution. The survey was designed to verify and update the information whether teachers working with SEN students feel safe and comfortable in their jobs. The survey was carried out in October 2023 by means of the Google Forms platform.

### Questionnaire

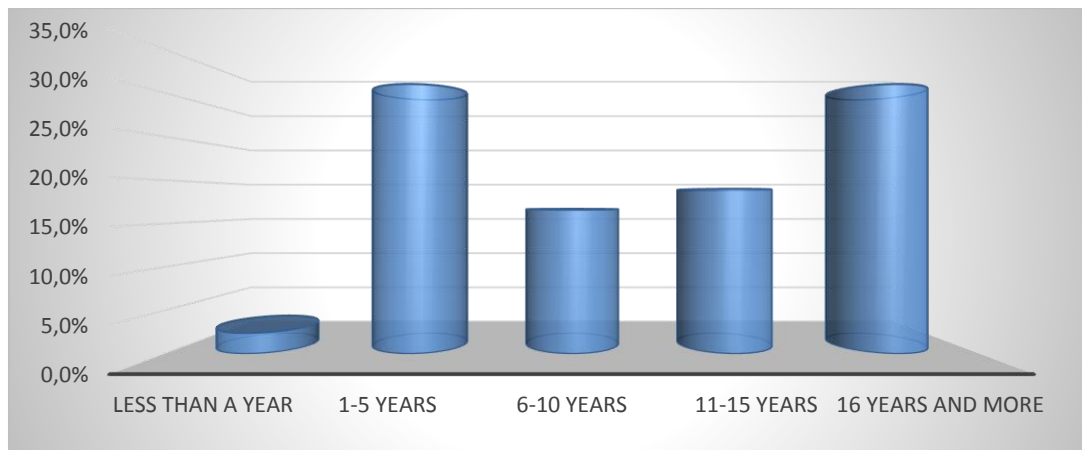
The survey consisted of 17 questions. 42 special-needs teachers (38 female and 4 male) took part. The analysis relied on the IBM SPSS 26.0 package including the Exact Tests module. Any dependences, correlations or differences are statistically significant if  $p \leq 0.05$ . Chi-square independence test was utilised in statistical analyses. The estimated test probability, designated 'p', shows if a relationship in question is statistically significant. All the tests were based on the special-needs teachers' age, gender, and work experience.

## 3. Results and discussion

The health condition and types of risks to teachers have a decisive impact on the quality of teaching and consequently on students' performance (Hattie, 2009). Special-needs teachers face a greater challenge of teaching students with multiple disabilities. Research and reports published by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) on mental health promotion in the workplace identify a growing awareness of the issue as a public health problem (World Health Organization, 2002).

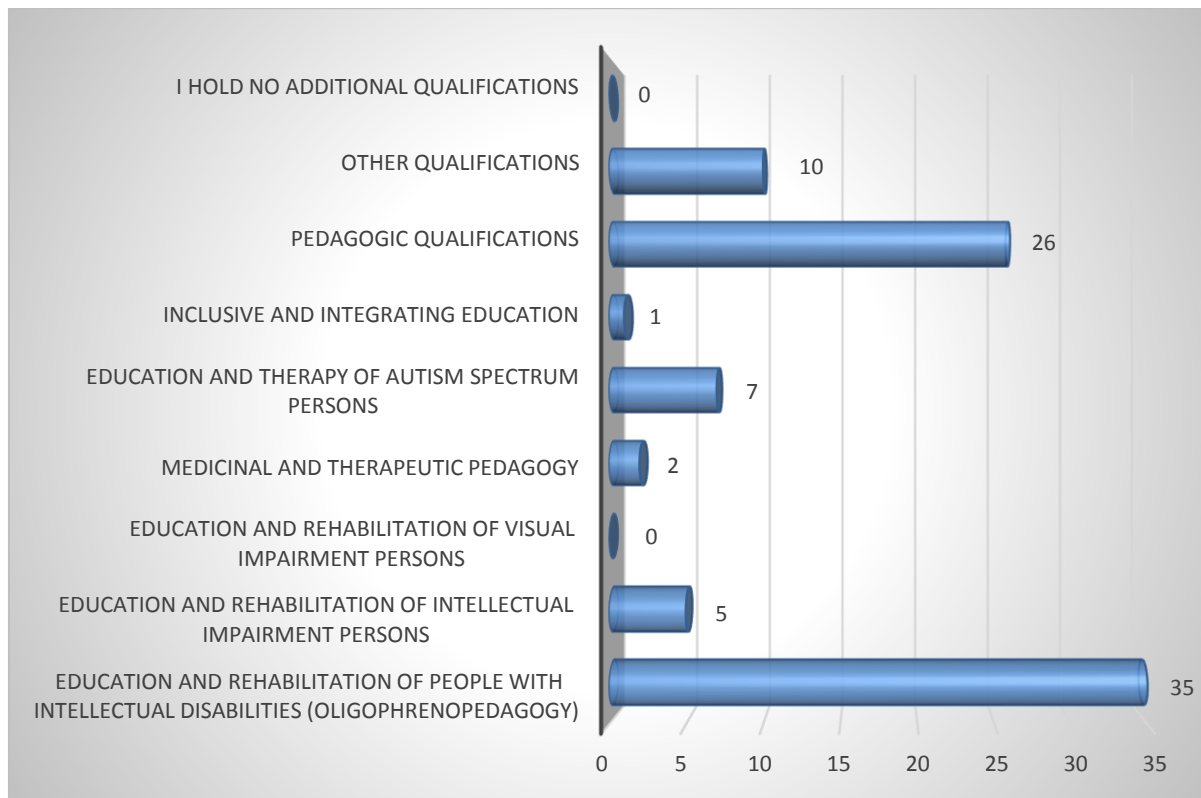
Among the 'high-risk professions', teachers have always been regarded as particularly exposed to high stress levels at work, especially those working with SEN children (Smith, Bourke, 1992). Kovess-Masféty et al. (2006) compare teachers' mental health to that of other professional groups and often point to a higher mental fatigue, i.e., psychological stress and job burnout, in teachers.

The special-needs teachers were therefore asked to designate their experience with the institution in question one. Those with 1-5 and 16 and more years of working constituted the largest groupings (31% each) (Figure 1). The question matters to working with SEN children. As reported by Colmenero et al. (2019), González-Gil et al. (2016), the experience of special-needs work is positively correlated with a positive attitude to educating SEN students.



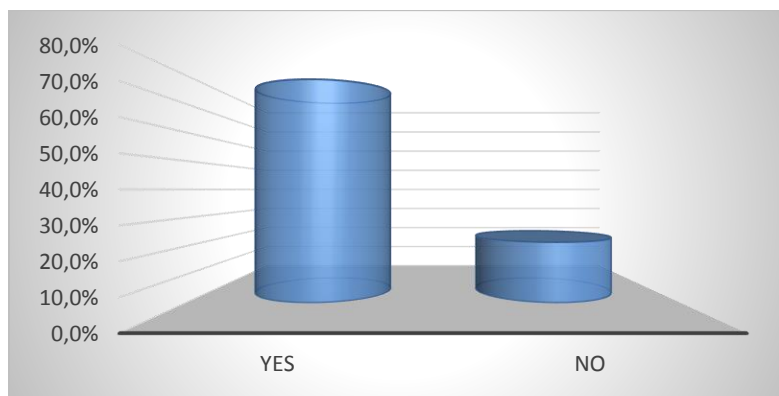
**Figure 1.** The percentage shares of responses concerning the special-needs work experience.

Research by Cassady (2011) and Shady et al. (2013) has shown the lack of knowledge and professional skills in teachers working with SEN students account for the teachers' negative attitudes. Efforts at professional improvement, according to Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), are intended to improve the teachers' professional knowledge, skills and attitudes and enhance their students' performance, including that of SEN students, on the other hand. The special-needs teachers were therefore requested to identify additional qualifications for working with SEN children. The information gained suggested the teachers most often hold qualifications in education and rehabilitation of persons with intellectual disabilities (special-needs education). The teachers quite often said their pedagogic background supports their dealing and working with SEN individuals. None of the teachers indicated the education and rehabilitation of persons with visual impairments had any significance or in any way contributed to their qualifications for work with SEN persons (Figure 2). The special-needs teachers named early school and pre-school education, logopaedics, social rehabilitation, and neurologopedy (2 indications) among their additional qualifications. These survey results suggest the teachers with the institution of choice take a responsible approach to work with SEN students, assuming improvements to their qualifications aid with supporting and assisting with the best possible teaching of SEN students.



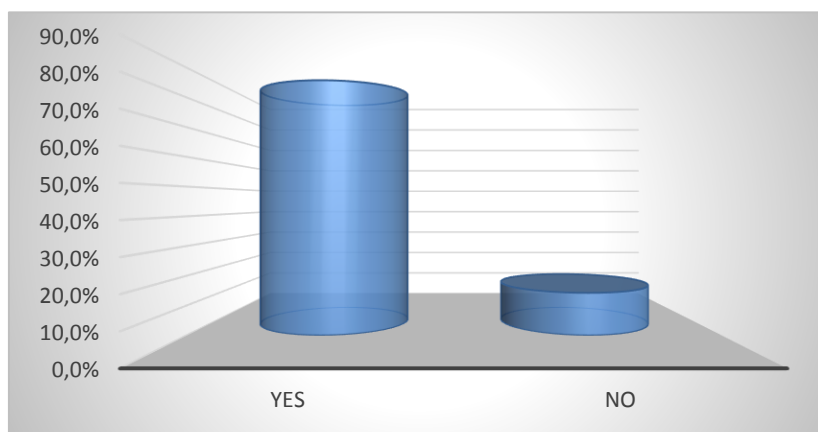
**Figure 2.** The percentage shares of responses concerning the special-needs teachers' qualifications.

The next question asked the special-needs teachers if they were warned of the risk associated with working for the institution at the time of hiring. A great majority (80%) said they were (Figure 3). This information suggests the teachers realised what working with SEN students involves and that it might require more commitment. Allen and Cowdery (2015) report factors like teachers' attitudes and professional competences play a crucial role in planning education, implementation and assessment of teaching and are important factors in SEN students attaining their objectives. Statistical analysis corroborated male teachers were informed by their employers of the risk associated with their work, whereas not all the female teachers were warned of the risk inherent in working with SEN students. Gender was proven not to display a statistically significant dependence ( $\chi^2 = 1.44$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.229$ ), however. No statistically significant dependence was found between the teachers' age and being informed of the risk in their workplace by the employer ( $\chi^2 = 3.71$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.156$ ). Special-needs teachers with more than 16 years of experience accounted for most teachers not warned about the risk. The coefficient of dependence was statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 8.81$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = 0.032$ ).



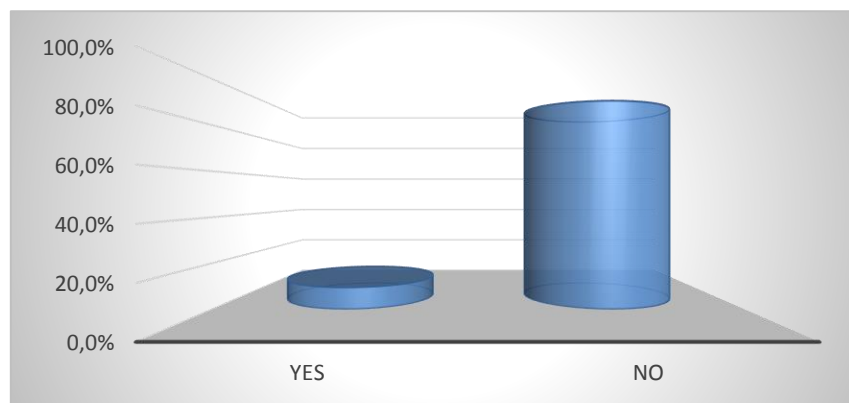
**Figure 3.** The percentage shares of responses concerning the information about the professional risk in the special-needs teacher's position.

The teachers were asked if the institution provided them with additional knowledge about the various possible behaviours of SEN students. More than 80% answered in the affirmative. More than 14% said they hadn't received any such information (Figure 4). This demonstrates the teachers inform and share experience and knowledge of SEN students' behaviour with one another. Such information, appropriate attitudes and conduct towards SEN students, according to Blazar and Kraft (2017), have positive effects on the acceptance of children in their social milieus. A statistical analysis of these results indicates the special-needs teachers' gender exhibits no statistically significant dependence ( $\chi^2 = 0.25$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.614$ ). Among the teachers aged below 40, 2 out of 21 had not been supplied with extra information on their students' behaviour. 4 out of 16 teachers aged 41 to 50 were not additionally informed about the variety of SEN students' behaviour. The special-needs teachers aged above 51 received additional knowledge about the diverse behaviours of SEN students. The teachers' age fails to differentiate the information whether they had obtained additional knowledge on the variety of SEN students' behaviours in any statistically significant ways ( $\chi^2 = 2.72$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.256$ ). Special-needs teachers with shorter work experiences were more often not fully informed about SEN students' spontaneous behaviour than more experienced pedagogues. The coefficient of dependence was statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 1.07$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = 0.785$ ).



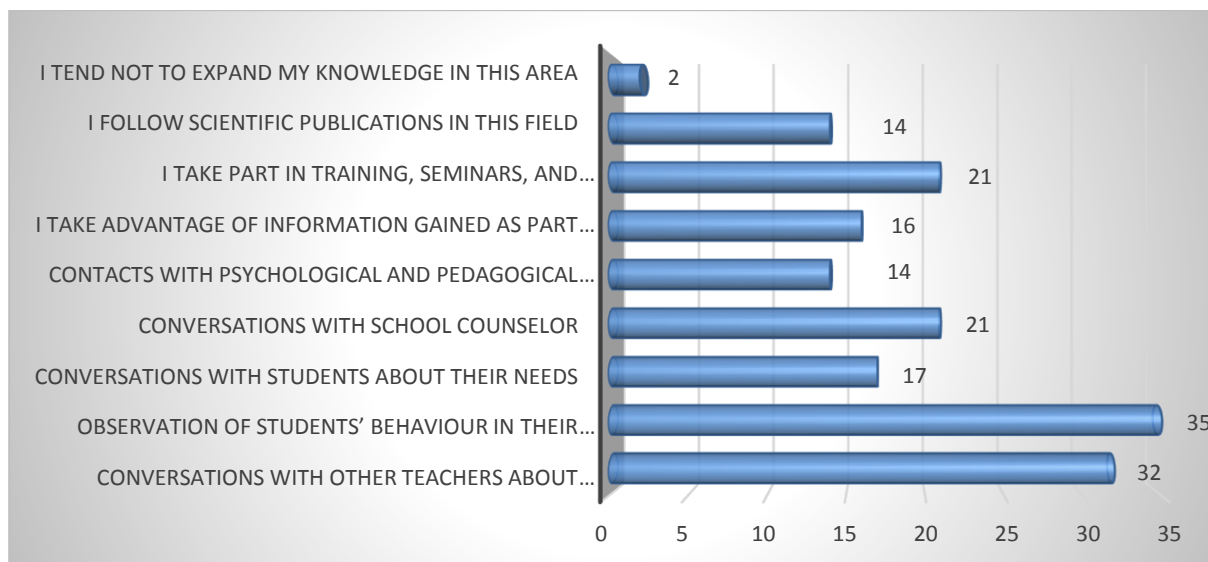
**Figure 4.** The percentage shares of responses concerning the provision of additional knowledge about SEN students' natural or spontaneous behaviour.

The following question asked the respondents if, at work, they feel fears or anxieties because they find themselves in a school environment including SEN children. 90% special-needs teachers answered they felt none (Figure 5). Both the information from the survey and reported by Agavelyan et al. (2020) and Sevilla Santo et al. (2018) represent the view the older the pedagogues the more aware they become of the problems they may come up against and the clearer their fears are of finding themselves around SEN students. The respondents could also designate the types of fear or anxieties these are. Female rather than male teachers have fears of staying together with SEN students. This coefficient of dependence is not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 0.54$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.461$ ). The teachers aged below 40 and 41 to 50 are more often anxious about staying in the same school environment as SEN students than those aged above 51. The dependence between these variables isn't statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 0.69$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.708$ ). The special-needs teachers with up to 5 years of work experience have most fears about finding themselves around SEN students. No dependence between these variables was shown ( $\chi^2 = 3.93$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = 0.268$ ).



**Figure 5.** The percentage shares of responses concerning fears about finding themselves in a school environment including SEN children.

Question six enquired how the teachers gain additional information and experience of skillful and effective dealing with SEN students. The special-needs teachers were asked to identify a minimum of 3 such sources. They most frequently selected the responses like: the observation of students' behaviour in their peer groups and dialogue with other teachers about students' needs. In general, the teachers were not motivated to expand their knowledge in this area (Figure 6).



**Figure 6.** The percentage shares of responses concerning looking for information about their SEN students' behaviour.

The statistical analysis found some dependences in the responses relating to information gained from the teachers' educational background ( $\chi^2 = 10.11$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.006$ ) and dialogues with students about their needs ( $\chi^2 = 8.86$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = 0.031$ ) (Table 1).

**Table 1.**

*The sources of additional information and the experience of SEN students' behaviour*

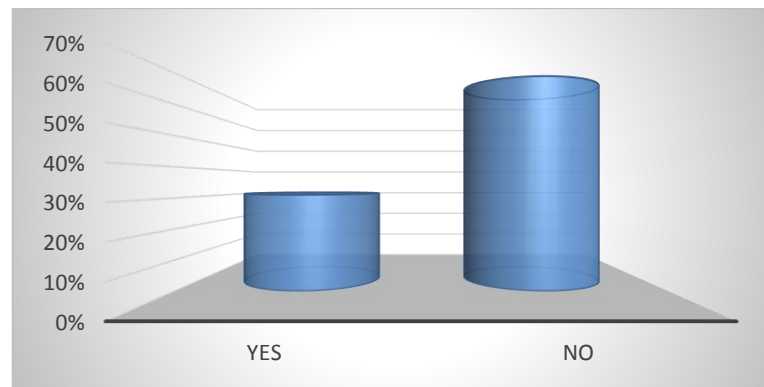
Response	Dependence between variables (gender)	Dependence between variables (age)	Dependence between variables (work experience)
<b>Conversations with other teachers about students' needs</b>	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 0.01$ , $df = 1$ , $p = 0.973$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 4.74$ , $df = 2$ , $p = 0.094$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 5.87$ , $df = 3$ , $p = 0.118$ )
<b>Observation of students' behaviour in their peer groups</b>	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 0.71$ , $df = 1$ , $p = 0.403$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 0.17$ , $df = 2$ , $p = 0.916$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 2.90$ , $df = 3$ , $p = 0.410$ )
<b>Conversations with students about their needs</b>	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 1.84$ , $df = 1$ , $p = 0.174$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 1.01$ , $df = 2$ , $p = 0.603$ )	A statistically significant dependence is found between work experience and dialogue with students about their needs ( $\chi^2 = 8.86$ , $df = 3$ , $p = 0.031$ )
<b>Conversations with the school counselor</b>	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 0.03$ , $df = 1$ , $p = 0.863$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 0.24$ , $df = 2$ , $p = 0.883$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 7.78$ , $df = 3$ , $p = 0.051$ )



Cont. table 1.

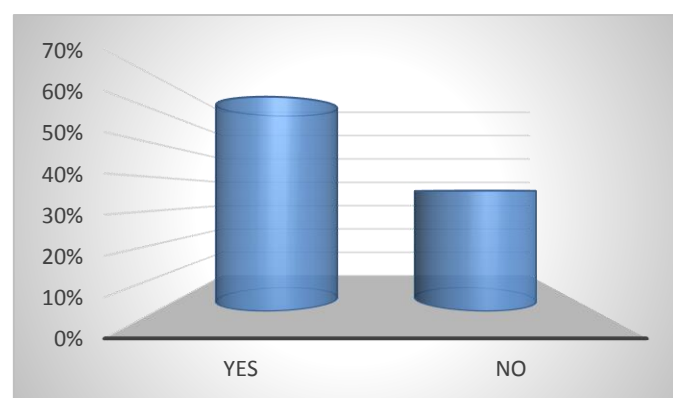
<b>Contacts with psychological and pedagogical counselling centres and analysis of opinions (decisions) from these institutions</b>	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 3.71$ , $df = 1$ , $p = 0.054$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 1.73$ , $df = 2$ , $p = 0.419$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 6.85$ , $df = 3$ , $p = 0.076$ )
<b>I use information from my educational background</b>	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 0.17$ , $df = 1$ , $p = 0.683$ )	A statistically significant dependence is found between age and the use of information from educational background ( $\chi^2 = 10.11$ , $df = 2$ , $p = 0.006$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 2.83$ , $df = 3$ , $p = 0.418$ )
<b>Participation in training, seminars, and workshops on this subject matter</b>	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 0.01$ , $df = 1$ , $p = 0.954$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 0.25$ , $df = 2$ , $p = 0.884$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 0.720$ , $df = 3$ , $p = 0.868$ )
<b>I follow scientific publications on this subject matter</b>	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 0.43$ , $df = 1$ , $p = 0.509$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 1.84$ , $df = 2$ , $p = 0.397$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 3.59$ , $df = 3$ , $p = 0.308$ )
<b>I tend not to expand my knowledge, relying on my experience</b>	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 0.26$ , $df = 1$ , $p = 0.613$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 3.69$ , $df = 2$ , $p = 0.158$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2 = 1.17$ , $df = 3$ , $p = 0.760$ )

The next question asked whether the teachers queried saw threats from the students who require more attention. 70% special-needs teachers said No (Figure 7). Yumuş (2013) found teachers with 15 or more years of experience were better able to deal with undesirable behaviours than their less experienced colleagues. In turn, Collado-Sanchis et al. (2020), Corral (2019) proved negative attitudes were more common among students with grave emotional or behavioural issues. The teachers selecting the affirmative response provided more detailed answers. They pointed to verbal/non-verbal aggression, biting, scratching, throwing toys, and pushing peers. The male teachers note risks in SEN students' behaviour more frequently than female special-needs teachers. The dependence between the variables is not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 0.63$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.427$ ). The pedagogues aged 41 to 50 see dangers from SEN students more often than the remaining special-needs teachers. The coefficient of dependence is not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 5.93$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.052$ ). The teachers with more than 16 years of experience notice threats targeted at them by SEN students most often. No dependence between the variables was noted ( $\chi^2 = 3.07$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = 0.381$ ).



**Figure 7.** The percentage shares of responses concerning risk perception in students' behaviour.

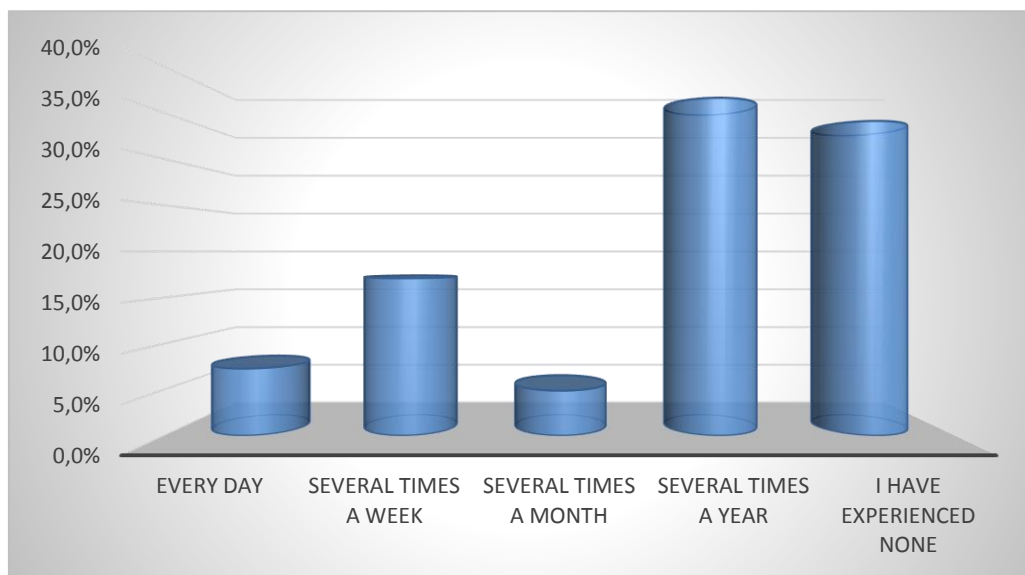
The teachers were also asked if they had ever sustained verbal or non-verbal (physical) aggression from SEN students. 60% admitted they had (Figure 8). Verbal aggression (9 indications) and swearing (6 indications) were declared most often. Shouting, scratching, biting, spitting, spiteful comments to cause annoyance, hitting, escaping, no response to teachers' instructions, kicking, and pinching were some other answers. As claimed by Citrom and Volanka (2001), such behaviours are intended to cause pain to others. The same authors report this behaviour may be both conscious and beyond someone's control. The statistical analysis implies half male and female teachers sustained verbal and non-verbal aggression from SEN students. This is not dependent in a statistically significant way ( $\chi^2 = 0.28$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.595$ ). The special-needs teachers aged below 40 and 41 to 50 experience verbal or physical aggression more frequently than the remaining groups of teachers. No dependence was found between the variables ( $\chi^2 = 3.34$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.188$ ). Pedagogues with 6 to 10 years of experience encounter SEN students' aggression most rarely. Every second teacher from the remaining groups experiences aggression. The coefficient of dependence is not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 2.15$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = 0.541$ ).



**Figure 8.** The percentage shares of responses concerning verbal or non-verbal aggression from SEN students.

A study by Gök (2013) presents the viewpoint of teachers working with SEN children. The authors believe students in the process of being taught not only find it hard to adapt to their school environment but also display aggression towards their peers and special-needs teachers. Craig et al. (2000) point out a number of pedagogues regard verbal as less harmful than physical

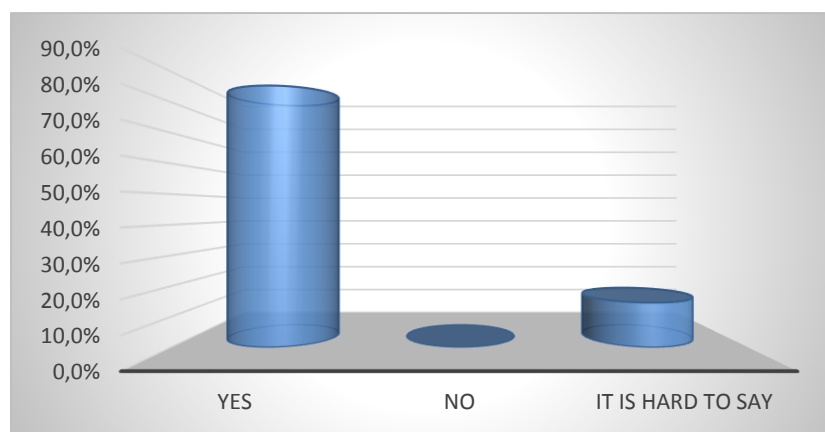
aggression, therefore, the authors believe there's no need for clear interventions in the case of verbal aggression. The following question, therefore, requested the special-needs teachers to say how often SEN persons in the institution examined showed verbal and non-verbal aggression towards their teachers. A substantial portion of the pedagogues (more than 36%) pointed to several times a year, on the other hand, 30% reported no verbal or non-verbal aggression from their SEN students (Figure 9). The statistical analysis suggests the teachers of both genders experienced aggression from their SEN students. The coefficient of dependence is not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 4.95$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.292$ ). Pedagogues aged 41 to 50 most often experience their SEN students' aggression a few times a year and every day, whereas those aged below 40, several times a week. The coefficient of dependence is statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 17.62$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $p = 0.024$ ). Pedagogues with work experience below 5 years and 16 years and more encounter aggression a few times a year. Worryingly, teachers with the shortest experience sustain aggression from their SEN students daily. The coefficient is not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 8.80$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p = 0.719$ ).



**Figure 9.** The incidence of aggression against the special-needs teachers from SEN students.

The pedagogues were then asked to comment on whether, in case of a student's self-aggression, they are able to control their emotions and at the same time help the student handle that difficult situation. More than 85% declared they are, whereas 14% chose the answer 'I don't know, it's hard to say'. As reported by Durğun (2010) and in the light of our own results, teachers aged 51 and more are more professional at assisting and dealing with SEN children than younger teaching staff, although our survey failed to determine whether the teachers are mentally and emotionally prepared for such occurrences (Figure 10). All the male teachers were capable of controlling their emotions and assisting SEN students with difficult situations. 5 females surveyed were unable to decide if they'd be able to help a SEN individual in a hard situation. No statistically significant dependence could be found between gender and assisting students in difficult situations ( $\chi^2 = 0.725$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.394$ ). The special-needs

teachers are not statistically significantly differentiated by their approach to the aggression of and helping SEN students ( $\chi^2 = 0.14$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.933$ ). 11 to 15 years of the teachers' experience shows it is related to a more professional approach to SEN children, especially in difficult circumstances. The statistical analysis implies the special-needs teachers with less experience have trouble determining if they are able to control their emotions and help children in difficulties. Work experience didn't show a statistically significant dependence ( $\chi^2 = 2.29$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = 0.513$ ).



**Figure 10.** The percentage shares of responses to the question, In case of a student's self-aggression, are you able to control your emotions and at the same time help a student handle that difficult situation?

The next item in the questionnaire focuses on whether teachers find it hard to realise the core curriculum with SEN students and if the fluctuating organisational solutions in school have an adverse effect on their work. Another important question asked whether they suffer from time shortages to realise the curriculum with all SEN students (Table 2). The problems realising the core curriculum with SEN students were assessed on a scale from 1 (no difficulties) to 5 (very serious difficulties).

The responses range between 36 and 40 indications. Each teacher has a different perception of problems realising the core curriculum with SEN students. Tomlinson (2017) points out pedagogues may differentiate teaching content, processes, and outcomes, and even the learning environment depending on SEN students' readiness, interests and learning profiles. A large variability of students' needs is an interesting distribution of responses to a question set. Out of 40, 11 pedagogues have trouble with varied students' needs, whereas 7 special-needs teachers come up against grave difficulties in realising their core curriculum. 14 pedagogues were found to encounter trouble with the lack of time as it's necessary to realise their curricula with all students. Even more worryingly, 4 teachers have grave problems with insufficient time to realise their core curricula. In order to improve the quality of teaching in a diversified group of SEN students and handle the short time, Tomilson (2017) suggests students work with peers and carry out tasks that rely not only on the strengths of all team members but also to enhance the interests of a given student. This is the statistical analysis for this question (Table 3).

**Table 2.**  
*Difficulties in realising core curriculum with SEN students*

The areas under assessment	SCALE					Total indications
	1	2	3	4	5	
<b>The numbers of indications by special-needs teachers</b>						
The variability of legal solutions	20	9	3	2	2	<b>36</b>
The variability of organisational solutions in school	21	10	2	2	4	<b>39</b>
The method of documenting actions	16	12	4	3	4	<b>39</b>
Class sizes	18	14	5	1	2	<b>40</b>
The low competences of other teachers	22	7	4	5	1	<b>39</b>
Cooperation with students' parents	14	13	8	3	1	<b>39</b>
Cooperation with specialists in school (counselor/psychologist)	26	8	4	0	1	<b>39</b>
Cooperation with out-of-school specialists (counselling centre)	17	12	7	1	1	<b>38</b>
A great variety of students' needs	12	10	6	5	7	<b>40</b>
Time shortages in class as the curriculum must be realised with all students	12	9	9	5	4	<b>39</b>
Students' aggression against teachers	18	9	9	2	2	<b>40</b>
The lack of students' interest in lessons	18	10	7	2	4	<b>41</b>

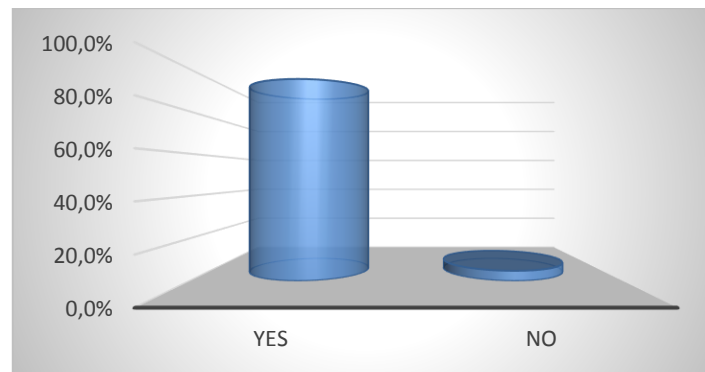
**Table 3.**  
*Statistical analysis of responses concerning difficulties in realising core curriculum with SEN students*

Response	Dependence between variables (gender)	Dependence between variables (age)	Dependence between variables (work experience)
<b>The variability of legal solutions</b>	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2=5.09$ , $df=4$ , $p=0.278$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2=3.32$ , $df=8$ , $p=0.913$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2=11.73$ , $df=12$ , $p=0.467$ )
<b>The variability of organisational solutions in school</b>	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2=5.84$ , $df=4$ , $p=0.211$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2=8.61$ , $df=8$ , $p=0.376$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2=7.96$ , $df=12$ , $p=0.788$ )
<b>The method of documenting actions</b>	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2=4.41$ , $df=4$ , $p=0.354$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2=3.44$ , $df=8$ , $p=0.904$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2=6.99$ , $df=12$ , $p=0.858$ )
<b>Class sizes</b>	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2=5.04$ , $df=4$ , $p=0.229$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2=3.60$ , $df=8$ , $p=0.891$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2=7.14$ , $df=12$ , $p=0.848$ )
<b>The low competences of other teachers</b>	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2=1.81$ , $df=4$ , $p=0.770$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2=4.67$ , $df=8$ , $p=0.792$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2=9.18$ , $df=12$ , $p=0.687$ )
<b>Cooperation with students' parents</b>	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2=2.04$ , $df=4$ , $p=0.729$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2=4.81$ , $df=8$ , $p=0.779$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2=13.56$ , $df=12$ , $p=0.329$ )
<b>Cooperation with specialists in school (counselor/ psychologist)</b>	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2=1.79$ , $df=3$ , $p=0.616$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2=3.37$ , $df=6$ , $p=0.761$ )	No dependence between variables found ( $\chi^2=15.84$ , $df=9$ , $p=0.070$ )

Cont. table 3.

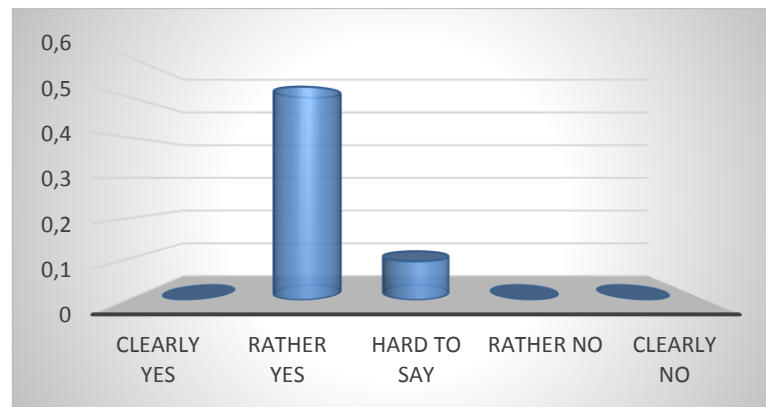
<b>Cooperation with out-of-school specialists (counselling centre )</b>	A statistically significant dependence is found between gender and the statement assessment (chi <sup>2</sup> =12.02, df=4, p=0.017)	No dependence between variables found (chi <sup>2</sup> =13,22, df=8, p=0,104)	No dependence between variables found (chi <sup>2</sup> =15,43, df=12, p=0,219)
<b>A great variety of students' needs</b>	No dependence between variables found (chi <sup>2</sup> = 5.01, df=4, p=0.285)	No dependence between variables found (chi <sup>2</sup> =9.65, df=8, p=0.290)	No dependence between variables found (chi <sup>2</sup> =9.75, df=12, p=0.637)
<b>Time shortages in class as the curriculum must be realised with all students</b>	No dependence between variables found (chi <sup>2</sup> =4.34, df=4, p=0.362)	No dependence between variables found (chi <sup>2</sup> = 7.18, df=8, p=0.517)	No dependence between variables found (chi <sup>2</sup> =8.02, df=12, p=0.783)
<b>Students' aggression against teachers</b>	A statistically significant dependence is found between gender and the statement assessment (chi <sup>2</sup> =12.48, df=4, p=0.014)	No dependence between variables found (chi <sup>2</sup> =10.25, df=8, p=0.248)	No dependence between variables found (chi <sup>2</sup> =12.40, df=12, p=0.413)
<b>The lack of students' interest in lessons</b>	No dependence between variables found (chi <sup>2</sup> =6.54, df=4, p=0.162)	No dependence between variables found (chi <sup>2</sup> =4.66, df=8, p=0.792)	No dependence between variables found (chi <sup>2</sup> =12.99, df=12, p=0.369)

The special-needs teachers were asked about the issue of their institutions (safe territories) being fit for work with SEN students. More than 95% said the institutions they work at are adapted to SEN children's needs. Fewer than 5% pointed out their institutions required more specialist facilities and premises – tools and locations that may make working with those individuals more efficient (Figure 11). A student recess room helps deal with behaviors disrupting everyday activities, including self-mutilation, withdrawal, reluctance to cooperate, aggression, destroying objects, and escalating students' emotions (Hardan et al., 2015). Sensory stimulation in a specialist room may provide for comfortable space and the venting of students' negative behaviour and emotions. The male teachers believe their institutions were fit for working with SEN students. Two females were of the opinion classrooms needed to be modernised. The coefficient of dependence is not statistically significant (chi<sup>2</sup> = 0.25, df = 1, p = 0.613). The special-needs teachers' age showed no dependences among the variables and is not statistically significant (chi<sup>2</sup> = 0.32, df = 2, p = 0.849). Their work experience failed to exhibit any statistically significant dependences, either (chi<sup>2</sup> = 2.23, df = 3, p = 0.525).



**Figure 11.** The percentage shares of responses concerning the institution's fitness for work with SEN students.

Involved teachers more often show good performance (Bakker, Bal, 2010), are more committed to their duties (Hakanen et al., 2006), and more commonly report greater job satisfaction, characterised above all by a positive experience of working. Therefore, the final question addressed the issue of satisfaction with working with SEN students in a given institution (Figure 12). More than 50% of the special-needs teachers declared they are rather satisfied. A clear Yes was selected by more than 38% (16 indications). Nearly 10% were hesitant and chose the answer "hard to say" eventually (4 indications). A range of studies, e.g., by Klassen et al., (2012), Shoshani and Eldor, (2016) or Simbul (2010), demonstrated overall teachers' commitment is closely tied to their work satisfaction, which corroborates this survey. In some other research (Hakanen, 2009), however, teachers reported a high work dissatisfaction connected to stress and burnout. Although these problems may seem trivial, they should be taken into account, since persistent job stress may lead to a number of health conditions (Schaufeli et al., 2009). Our survey implies the special-needs teachers are generally satisfied with their work. Males feel the satisfaction more often than females. 4 of the latter said it was hard to decide whether they feel job satisfaction. The special-needs teachers' gender was not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 0.66$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.718$ ). The undecided pedagogues are aged below 40 (3 people) and from 41 to 50 (1). The dependence between the variables wasn't statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 3.95$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.412$ ). The special-needs pedagogues with over 16 years of experience are clearly more satisfied with their work than the remaining groups. No statistically significant dependences were found between the variables ( $\chi^2 = 6.20$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p = 0.401$ ).



**Figure 12.** The distribution of responses concerning the special-needs teachers' satisfaction with their work.

#### 4. Conclusions

This study proves that, although students with disabilities exhibit social malfunctioning, special-needs teachers feel safe and satisfied with their work. Most are aware of workplace problems as they know working with SEN students requires more effort, hard work, and responsibility. The survey demonstrates a majority of special-needs teachers feel or have no fears of the environment including SEN students in spite of the risk and inconveniences some special-needs teachers encounter.

Our survey points to several important aspects that are evidence of high workplace stress associated with special-needs teachers' work, however.

All in all, working with SEN children requires high qualifications and skills of teachers, as well as experience and continued self-improvement. The issue of teachers' safety is of paramount importance, too, as it allows for a greater persistence in the services of SEN persons and reduces burnout. Each teacher working with SEN children must not only be alert to possible risks but also respond to the needs of a demanding group - SEN children.

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