

DIRECTION OF BIASES, BURNOUT LEVELS, INTERPERSONAL ADAPTATION, AND PROFESSIONAL SELF-REPRESENTATION: A SURVEY ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPPORT TEACHERS

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This study analysed biases towards the inclusion of disabled students in regular schools, burnout levels and interpersonal adaptation, professional self-representation and attitudes towards students with disabilities in a group of 67 special education support teachers, attending the SISIS educational course in Catania. The following instruments were used: a questionnaire on social attitudes towards disability (De Caroli e al., 2007), the MBI (Maslach, 1982), the Q.A.I. (Di Nuovo, 1998) and three Semantic Differentials (Osgood e al., 1957).

Results. Teachers seemed to show overall positive attitudes towards disability and school inclusion of disabled students. As far as the burnout effect is concerned, a small number of teachers felt that their professional role was inadequate, thus showing attitudes of hostility and aloofness towards their colleagues, their disabled students as well as towards the challenging situation; furthermore, lack of emotional resources and poor personal fulfilment in the professional field were found in a small percentage of cases. On one hand, results on interpersonal adaptation indicated a significant concern about one's own social image and expression of closing and avoiding attitudes towards stressful situations; on the other hand, reduced impulsiveness and stress in social situations.

The rating for professional self-representation by special education support teachers who showed low levels of emotional exhaustion and high levels of personal fulfilment was higher than the rating for attitudes towards colleagues and disabled students (characterized by several "weaknesses", as previously found in De Caroli e al., 2007); furthermore, teachers who showed low levels of non-affirmativeness and impulsiveness presented with higher self-esteem as special education support teachers.

Deeper knowledge on this phenomenon might represent an operational instrument for designing vocational training courses, aimed at professional development and improvement of the quality of life.

Keywords: Support teachers, Professional self-representation, Burnout Syndrome

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