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From Fostering Competence and Belonging to Intervention: Pre-Service Teachers' Readiness to Address Social Exclusion through the Lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

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Abstract

Social exclusion and peer ostracism pose systemic challenges in classrooms, requiring effective teacher intervention to foster inclusive learning communities. However, research indicates persistent difficulties in identifying covert exclusion, alongside avoidance tendencies and superficial responses. Teachers' readiness to intervene depends not only on pedagogical knowledge but also on psychological resources, perceived competence, and sense of belonging.

Grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which identifies competence and belonging as basic psychological needs essential for engagement and optimal functioning, this study examines how teacher education develops these resources and their relationship to pre-service teachers' readiness to address overt and covert social exclusion. The study explores the connection between pre-service teachers' competence, belonging, and intervention readiness, particularly within an online course emphasizing collaborative pair work.

A mixed-methods design was employed. Quantitative data were collected via questionnaire from 50 pre-service teachers in an elementary certification program who completed the online course "Promoting Children at Risk and Social Exclusion." Qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews with 15 participants to examine how learning experiences influenced their readiness to identify and manage exclusionary situations.

By integrating psychological need satisfaction with professional readiness for social intervention, this study extends the application of SDT to inclusive educational practice. It offers evidence-based implications for teacher education programs preparing future teachers for socially complex classroom situations.

Keywords: Pre-Service Teacher Education; Self-Determination Theory; Social Exclusion; Teacher Readiness