

Review of: "A Systematic Review of Factors Associated with Special Education Teacher Recruitment"

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Potential competing interests: The author(s) declared that no potential competing interests exist.

Summary statement:

This study was a systematic review of factors related to recruitment of special education teachers in the U.S. It is pointed out that there is a teacher shortage in the U.S., and specifically in the special education area. The need to find factors that can improve recruitment of special education teachers is explored. Using search terms the author identifies, 3008 studies were identified for potential inclusion. After excluding duplications, 2110 studies were identified. From these, only 25 studies ($25/2110 = 1.2\%$) were included in the analysis after applying inclusionary and exclusionary criteria. Factors identified in the results that will supposedly increase recruitment of special education teachers were: to increase financial support, to increase experiences with disability and teaching, to increase flexible and intentional pathways, to target recruitment efforts, to foster motivation to make an impact, and to discuss job security due to teacher shortage. Prior reviews concerning retention of special education teachers (vs. recruitment) were done by Billingsley (1993, 2004, 2019) but the author does not compare and contrast the current findings with the Billingsley reports. In the Methods section, more work is needed on the operationalization of the variables that were studied. For example, for "Settings" in Table 1, there are at least 5 studies where neither Teacher Preparation Program, nor School Setting apply, yet these are the only two categories listed. It is also unclear in the Results section how the author arrived at the factors that were identified. Were these simple frequency counts from the studies included in the systematic review? It would be nice to have those 25 studies included in the systematic review to be clearly identified in the References section, (say, with asterisks), so that efforts at replication are easier.

Major strengths and impact on the field:

If the author works on more precisely operationalizing the variables included in the systematic review, and tying the results to prior reviews (e.g., the three Billingsley reports, which concerned retention), then this study might have a stronger impact on the special education field than it currently does in its present condition.

Specific areas of improvement:

Major points:

1. The author lists five factors that were explored to increase recruitment in the special education field: financial support, experience, flexible programming, targeted recruitment, and impact. A simple frequency analysis of data presented in Table 1 shows that in the 25 included studies, experience working with people with disabilities is the most frequently cited

factor, followed by financial support. These factors are mentioned but no ordering of their importance is spelled out. For example, in the Abstract, financial support is mentioned first, followed by experiences with individuals with disabilities. This ordering is also maintained in the Results section ("Recruitment Factors") as well as in the beginning of the Discussion section. This also mirrors the data headings in the "Factor or Strategy" heading in Table 1. A simple listing of the factors in order would make this paper more impactful. At present, the reader is left to tally the results in Table 1 on their own, and different conclusions can be made versus those written in the paper. Also, it is important to point out that even though experience was the most frequently tallied factor in recruitment of special education teachers, there are no data that show it to be a more powerful predictor of recruitment efforts compared to the other factors, such as flexible programming, for example. Again, this limits the usefulness of the results.

2. I wanted the 25 studies that were included in Table 1 (in the systematic review) to be designated with an asterisk in the References section so that replicability could be easier.
3. Include sample sizes in the Participants section in Table 1.
4. I really wanted more of a synopsis of prior reviews that examined recruitment in special education, and then to compare and contrast those results with the results from the present review. Also, I wanted the author to compare and contrast the findings from the previously published Billingsley papers (1993, 2004, 2019), that looked at retention, to see if there were any insights that could be gained from the present paper.
5. I found several discrepancies between what was reported in the text versus what was reported in Table 1. I will give two examples. 1. On p. 7, the Larwood, 2005, paper is mentioned in the "Flexible and Intentional Pathways" section, but it is not listed as a "Y" under "Flexible Programming" in the Table. 2. On p. 8, the Reeves et al., 2021, paper is listed in the "Making an Impact" section, but it is not listed as a "Y" under "Impact" in the Table.

Minor points:

1. In the "Rise of Alternative Pathways" section, it says "dropped 22%"; my computation shows around a 10% drop.
2. On p. 3, "initiatives for attractions" should be "initiatives for attracting"
3. Figure 2 is not referred to in text.
4. On p. 4, CITE is mentioned but not explained.
5. U.S. Department of Education Title II Reports, 2020, mentioned on p. 1 and p. 4, is not in the References section.
6. IOA Procedures is mentioned on p. 5 but is not explained.
7. In the PRISMA diagram (Figure 2), I get 2111, not 2110, after duplicates are removed.
8. Single and double asterisks in Figure 2 are not explained.
9. On p. 5, in "Research Design," high school students are mentioned but are not listed in Table 1.
10. On p. 5, Kurtts et al., 2007, and Wall et al., 2005, are listed as qualitative research designs but this is not listed in Table 1.
11. In Table 1, there are several papers (e.g., DeSutter & LeMire, 2016) where the two settings are both marked "N." Is there another category in "Setting" that needs to be included?
12. On p. 8, I believe the DeSutter & Dale reference should be DeSutter & LeMire.

