



**Cambridge Educational Research e-Journal**

ISSN: 2634-9876

Vol. 10, 2023, pp. 133-145

Journal homepage: <https://cerj.educ.cam.ac.uk/submissions/>



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## To cite this article:

Gao, C., & Katsapi, E. (2023). Predictors of Parental Attitudes Towards Inclusion in China. Cambridge Educational Research e-Journal, 10, 133-145.



Link to the article online: <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.104599>



Published online: 14 December 2023



# Predictors of parental attitudes towards inclusion in China

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## Abstract

Few studies have investigated the predictors of parental attitudes (PA) towards inclusion in China. There was also contradictory evidence on the role of several predictors of PA towards inclusion among studies in the Chinese context and between studies conducted in China and the Western world. This study aimed to identify the strongest predictors of PA towards inclusion in China by investigating and comparing different variables, including parental gender, income, education level, exposure to inclusion and the number of children with special education needs and disabilities in the household. A total of 203 participants completed an online quantitative questionnaire. The results showed that a higher parental education level, more exposure to inclusion and a larger number of children with SEND in the household significantly predicted more positive attitudes towards inclusion. Among them, exposure to inclusion was the strongest predictor. Several limitations of the current study are discussed followed by recommendations for future research. Implications of the current work for policymaking and home-school collaborations are outlined.

**Keywords:** Special and inclusive education, Parental attitudes, Inclusion, Disability, Education equality, China

## Introduction

The agenda of inclusive education is defined in the renowned Salamanca Statement as “all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties and differences they may have” (UNESCO, 1994, p. 11). Starting in the 1980s, China, like many other countries, embraced the concept of inclusion. The legal foundation of inclusion in China was set out by both the Constitution (1982) and Compulsory Education Law (1987) (Deng & Poon-McBrayer, 2012), which stated that “all children” at school age have the right to receive an education. Notably, in comparison to the West, China has taken a slightly different approach to the implementation of inclusive education. In 1994, the Chinese government put forward the “Learning in Regular Classroom” (LRC) scheme in parallel with the original special education provision (Xu et al., 2017). Differing from the Western idea of providing the appropriate education for children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND), the LRC aimed at increasing access to compulsory education for children with SEND.

In 2019, 49.15% of students with SEND attending education were placed in mainstream classrooms in China (Ministry of Education, 2020). Considering the socioeconomic context of China, LRC was a cost-effective initiation to safeguard the rights of children with SEND to receive an education, however, it also reflected the lack of resources to promote the quality of inclusive education (Deng & Poon-McBrayer, 2004). Scholars have also argued for the lack of philosophical underpinning of the Western inclusion idea in the Chinese context (Deng & Su, 2012; Qu, 2020). Dominated by the Confucian narrative of collectivism and hierarchical structure, inclusive education’s individualized approach faces many barriers in the Chinese cultural context (Qu, 2022). Even with the national policy in place, there is still a gap between inclusive policies and practices, and students with SEND are still prone to denial, discrimination, and segregation in mainstream classrooms (Jing, 2013; Wang, 2021). Much remains to be done in the understanding of inclusive education in China, which could potentially elucidate the ways forward to improve its quality. In this regard, the attitudes of parents, who are one of the main stakeholders of inclusive education, deserve further investigation. This study aimed to investigate the predictors of parental attitudes (PA) towards inclusion in China.

Attitude was selected as a significant measure since attitude predicts behaviours (Glasman & Albarracín, 2006). PA towards inclusion could potentially affect parents’ school choices, considering parents are usually the ones who decide if their children are going to mainstream or special schools (Sin, 2010). Moreover, since parents directly influence the peer relationship of children through modelling and teaching (Dunn, 1993), the attitudes of parents of typically developing (TD) children could potentially impact their children’s relationships with their peers with SEND. In addition, parents of children with SEND directly contribute to the quality of inclusive education (Lindsay & Dockrell, 2004). Therefore, PA is an influential factor in the quality of inclusive education. Considering Chinese inclusive education practices are unique to its cultural and economic context, Chinese parents’ attitudes could reflect the state of the current inclusive system and guide future practices.

To frame a general picture, several pieces of literature (mostly students’ dissertations) have investigated PA towards inclusion in China. Earlier studies found that less than half of the parents of TD children wanted their children to be studying with children with disabilities (Zhu et al., 2009). Most parents of children with SEND also objected to integration (Wu, 2005), which was probably due to the fear of their children being discriminated against in mainstream schools (Wang et al., 2011). Nevertheless, a more recent study showed that parents of children with SEND leaned towards inclusion in mainstream settings, but there were still 44.8% of them preferring special settings (Yan, 2014). Although Yan did not elucidate the reason for such a result, it could be possible that parents were slowly becoming more open towards inclusion. However, it should be noted that the above studies varied in their sample locations, and the quality of inclusive education and parental attitudes could show large discrepancies in different geographical regions of China. Notably, these studies looked into parents of TD children and children with SEND separately. They provided a general picture but there was no sufficient evidence to generate claims about the difference in PA between parents of TD children and children with SEND.

Apart from the above literature looking into the general attitudes towards inclusion, there are relatively limited studies looking into factors impacting PA towards inclusion in China. Prior studies identified some significant factors impacting PA, including whether they are parents of TD children or children with SEND, their socioeconomic status, education level, gender, their children’s school settings, and the types of disabilities of children in inclusive settings.

When considering the differences in attitudes between parents of TD children and children with SEND, a Western meta-analysis of 38 studies conducted between 1998 and 2008 showed that parents of children with SEND were less positive towards inclusion (de Boer et al., 2010). It was initially hypothesized that since parents of children with SEND are the main driving force for inclusion, they must have more positive attitudes towards it. In an attempt to explain this contradiction to the initial hypothesis, de Boer et al. (2010) stated that while parents of TD children deemed inclusion as a valuable opportunity to nurture their children's acceptance of individual differences, parents of children with SEND were more concerned about the quality of inclusive practices and their children's social emotional development. Nonetheless, that initial hypothesis seems to hold in the Chinese context. Niu et al. (2005) measured the attitudes of 240 parents of children with SEND and 480 parents of TD children. The results showed that parents of children with SEND were more positive towards the practice of LRC compared to parents of TD children. This result was also backed by more recent studies. For instance, Liu and Deng (2018) collected data from 900 parents in Henan province and found that parents of children with SEND showed significantly higher acceptance of inclusion compared to parents of TD children. Su et al. (2020) illustrated a similar pattern with data from 170 parents of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and 337 parents of TD children in Shanghai and Anhui province. It should be highlighted that Su et al. focused particularly on children with ASD. As noted in Niu et al.'s (2005) study, parents of children with physical disabilities showed more positive attitudes towards inclusion than parents of children with developmental disabilities. Similarly, parents of TD children were also more open to the inclusion of children with physical disabilities than intellectual disabilities. Therefore, based on the current evidence, there appeared to be a difference in attitudes between Chinese and Western parents and Chinese parents also held different attitudes towards the inclusion of children with different types of disabilities.

Another predictor of PA towards inclusion is the gender of parents. Studies conducted in Western and Chinese contexts showed similar conflicting results on this matter. One study of 586 primary schoolers' parents from Hong Kong showed that fathers were more positive towards inclusion (Lui et al., 2015). By contrast, another study of 900 kindergarten parents from Henan province found that mothers were more open to inclusion (Liu & Deng, 2018). Although Western studies rarely looked into gender differences in attitudes towards inclusion, similar inconsistency was noted by Lüke and Grosche's (2017) in their account of previous literature on this topic. In their own study of parents aged 17 to 85, Lüke and Grosche found that fathers were less positive towards inclusion. Although there was a lack of quantitative explanation of the reasons behind such inconsistencies between studies, Liu and Deng (2018) attributed the more positive attitudes of females to their compassion for children with SEND, and Lüke and Grosche (2017) ascribed their results to males' assumptions of competition in mainstream classrooms and their lack of confidence of the social inclusion of children with SEND. It could be argued that the current studies attempted to demonstrate the significance of parental gender as a predictor, but their sample also varied largely in other factors such as the parental age and children's school level, which could contribute to their differences in attitudes towards inclusion.

Furthermore, parental education level was another predictor of PA. It has been hypothesised that parents with higher educational levels would hold more positive attitudes towards inclusion, given that a higher education level, associated with higher socioeconomic status, would increase people's tolerance levels and make them more open to inclusion (Su et al., 2020). This postulation was evident in de Boer et al.'s (2010) review of Western studies, but studies in the Chinese context have yielded mixed results. To illustrate, Liu and Deng (2018) did not find any significant difference in PA towards inclusion between parents of different education levels. Zheng (2017) analysed 291 questionnaire results from kindergarten parents and teachers and found that parental education level is negatively correlated with attitudes towards inclusion. As mentioned in Zheng's study, one possible explanation for this could be that parents with higher levels of education were more critical of the practicality of inclusive ideals, especially when there were limited successful case study reports of inclusion in China. Nevertheless, the number of current studies is still very limited to draw a conclusion.

Although potentially related to education level, income as a predictor of PA towards inclusion was rarely investigated in any of the studies to date. One exception was de Boer et al.'s study (2010) on Western parents, in which higher socioeconomic status was associated with more positive attitudes towards inclusion. None of the literature in the Chinese context could provide insights into income as a predictor of PA towards inclusion. Given the high costs of providing for people with disabilities across many countries including China (Mitra et al., 2017; Xiong et al., 2011), it is plausible to propose that familial income could impact parental choice of education provision and thus their attitudes towards inclusion. In this regard, the current literature in the Chinese context presents a gap that needs to be addressed.

On top of that, school setting is also an often-neglected variable. Given that experiences shape attitudes (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993), prior experiences of interacting with children with SEND in school and family environments could have an impact on PA. In a rare study looking into school settings, Su et al. (2020) analysed questionnaire results from 170 parents of children with ASD and 337 parents of TD children. The results revealed that parents of children with ASD in mainstream settings were more positive towards inclusion compared to those of children in special provisions, even when their children were older and inclusion became more challenging. It should be noted that Su et al. did not illustrate how the attitudes of parents of TD children shifted as their children experienced inclusion in their schools. Nonetheless, their results indicated that school setting could be a potential predictor of PA that deserves further investigation.

Overall, the current literature on PA towards inclusion is still very limited and involves some inconsistencies. There was contradictory evidence on the role of several predictors of PA such as parental gender and educational levels. Predictors such as income levels and school settings received scant attention. Most existing studies investigated multiple predictors, but none of them compared the significance of different variables. In addition, most studies did not specify what exactly “inclusion” is for their participants. Still, definitions of inclusion vary, and they could potentially sway PA (Krischler et al., 2019). Therefore, this study aimed to fill in these gaps in the literature with consideration of the limitations of previous studies.

This study put forward a clear definition of “inclusion” to participants to improve this research’s validity. Inclusive education was introduced in this study as it “advocates for the rights of children with special education needs to be educated in the same classroom as their typically developing peers”. Data was gathered from both parents of TD children and parents of children with SEND using a series of demographic questions and the My Thinking About Inclusion (MTAI) scale (Stoiber et al., 1998) translated into Chinese. Inspired by the current literature, this study aimed to identify the strongest predictors of PA towards inclusion in China by investigating and comparing different variables, including parental gender, income, education levels, their children’s school settings (i.e., exposure to inclusion) and the number of children with SEND in the household. It was hypothesised that all these factors could have an impact on PA towards inclusion. The results of the current study extend the understanding of LRC – a unique form of inclusion – in China and identify possible improvements.

## Method

### Design

This study employed a quantitative, non-experimental correlational design using the questionnaire method. The independent variables consisted of parental gender, income, education, exposure to inclusion and the number of children with SEND in the household. The dependent variable was PA towards inclusion.

### Participants

The inclusion criteria for this study were Chinese parents of children with SEND or TD children or both. A total of 426 participants were recruited through opportunistic sampling from individual chats or networking group chats on WeChat (a Chinese social media platform). However, 132 of them did not give consent and 91 of them had missing data on one or more items in the questionnaire. After excluding these participants, there were a total of 203 valid responses. Of the 203, 79.3% ( $n = 161$ ) were female and 20.7% ( $n = 42$ ) were male. Moreover, 87.2% ( $n = 177$ ) of them had no child with SEND, 11.8% ( $n = 24$ ) of them had 1 child with SEND and 1% ( $n = 2$ ) of them had 2 or more children with SEND.

### Ethical Considerations

An information sheet was presented to participants at the start of the questionnaire. They were informed of the aims and purpose of the study, any risks involved and the anonymity of their data. Participants indicated their consent before being taken to the questionnaire. Participants were ensured their right to withdraw at any time

during the study. In terms of data security and storage, the questionnaire used in this study did not contain any personal information that could be used to identify any of the participants. Moreover, the data was stored on a password-protected account on Qualtrics during data collection, which was later securely downloaded to the UCL desktop. Upon completion of the study, the data was moved to UCL Data Safe Haven and removed from all other platforms. Regarding risk mitigation, the questionnaire contained no offending or upsetting questions. Mental health helplines and SEND parents support resources were also provided at the end of the questionnaire. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Department of Psychology and Human Development ethics committee at the Institute of Education, University College London's Faculty of Education and Society. The ethical considerations of this study were in line with the British Psychological Society ethics regulations.

## Materials

### *Measurement of Demographics*

There were seven demographic questions, covering participants' gender, marital status, education level, income, exposure to inclusion, the number of children in the household and the number of children in the household with SEND.

### *Measurement of PA Towards Inclusion*

A 28-item My Thinking About Inclusion scale (MTAI) (Stoiber et al., 1998) was used to measure PA towards inclusion. These 28 items measured three aspects of attitudes towards inclusion, including core perspectives, expected outcomes and classroom practices. Examples of those three aspects were "Students with special needs have the right to be educated in the same classroom as TD students", "Children with special needs will probably develop academic skills more rapidly in a special, separate classroom than in an integrated classroom" and "A good approach to managing inclusive classrooms is to have a special education teacher be responsible for instructing the children with special needs". The 28 statements were rated against a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly accept), 2 (agree), 3 (undecided/neutral) and 4 (disagree) to 5 (strongly reject). A PA total score was calculated by summing up the 28 items, with a lower score indicating a more positive attitude towards inclusion. This scale was shown to be highly reliable ( $\alpha = .91$ ) in a previous study measuring PA towards inclusion of 415 parents and 128 early childhood practitioners (Stoiber et al., 1998). In the present study, a high scale reliability score was also obtained ( $\alpha = .82$ ). No previous study has used this scale in Chinese, so this scale was translated into Chinese after the permission to translate was granted by its author.

## Procedures

Before the actual study, two native Chinese speakers, three Chinese parents of TD children and one Chinese parent of children with SEND were invited to take part in a pilot of the questionnaire. Afterwards, a few changes were made to its grammar and wording.

A short introduction of the study and the link to the questionnaire were sent to parental networking group chats and parents directly on WeChat. Following the link, participants were first presented with an information sheet that entailed basic information about the study, possible risks involved and data protection and privacy notices. They were also provided with clear definitions of inclusive education and SEND. Afterwards, participants were asked to give their consent in order to take part in the study. Participants would only be taken to the questionnaire if they gave their consent, and those who did not consent were removed from the analysis.

If participants were taken to the questionnaire, they would first answer demographic questions including their gender, marital status, education level, income, exposure to inclusion, the number of children in the household and the number of children in the household with SEND. Subsequently, they were presented with the MTAI scale that measured their attitudes towards inclusion.

After completing all the questions, participants were thanked and provided with mental health and parenting support resources if they felt they were affected by any of the themes covered in the questionnaire. A debrief page was presented at the end with some words of appreciation and the emails of the researcher and the supervisor. Participants were encouraged to contact the researcher and the supervisor for any questions and comments or to express their interest in receiving the results of this study in the future.

### Data Analysis Plan

A descriptive analysis with a histogram and boxplot was performed for the PA total score. The normality of PA total score was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test, which indicated that the scores were not normally distributed,  $W(203) = .93$ ,  $p < .001$ . However, the distribution was treated as normal since the histogram indicated a fairly normal distribution. After examining the boxplot, three participants' attitude scores were deleted as they were extreme outliers, leaving a total of 200 participants for the analysis. Following that, descriptive analyses were performed for independent variables of parental gender, income, education level, exposure to inclusion and the number of children with SEND in the household. A multiple linear regression was then conducted to examine whether these independent variables would predict the dependent variable of PA total score. In addition, the regression model looked into which of the independent variables was the strongest predictor of PA towards inclusion.

### Results

The descriptive analyses of the main independent variables are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Descriptive Statistics of Main Variables*

		<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	42	21.0%
	Female	158	79.0%
<b>Education level</b>	High school / college or below	85	42.5%
	Bachelors	86	43.0%
	Masters and above	29	14.5%
<b>Annual income</b>	Below 20,000 CNY	63	31.5%
	Between 20,001 and 80,000 CNY	78	39.0%
	Above 80,001 CNY	59	29.5%
<b>Number of children with SEND in the household</b>	0	174	87.0%
	1	24	12.0%
	2 or more	2	1.0%
<b>Exposure to inclusion</b>	No exposure	91	45.5%
	Exposure	109	54.5%

*Note.* Total = 200

A multiple linear regression was used to identify whether the independent variables of parental gender, income, education level, exposure to inclusion and the number of children with SEND in the household were predictors

of the dependent variable of PA towards inclusion. The results of regression analysis showed that these variables explained a statistically significant amount of variance in PA towards inclusion,  $F(5, 194) = 5.20, p < .001, R^2 = .12, R^2_{\text{adjusted}} = .10$ , see Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Summary of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting PA Towards Inclusion*

Model	Predictor	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients					F	p
		B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	$R^2$	$R^2_{\text{adjusted}}$		
1							.118	.095	5.202	.000
	Gender <sup>a</sup>	-.468	1.468	-.022	-.319	.750				
	Education level <sup>b</sup>	-2.509	.927	-.200	-2.706	.007				
	Annual income <sup>c</sup>	.797	.837	.071	.952	.342				
	Number of children with SEN in the household <sup>d</sup>	-4.173	1.701	-.178	-2.454	.015				
	Exposure to inclusion <sup>e</sup>	-3.732	1.298	-.211	-2.874	.004				

Note.  $N = 200$ ; <sup>a</sup>1 = Male, 2 = Female; <sup>b</sup>1 = High school / college or below, 2 = Bachelors, 3 = Masters and above; <sup>c</sup>1 = Below 20,000 CNY, 2 = Between 20,001 and 80,000 CNY, 3 = Above 80,001 CNY; <sup>d</sup>1 = 0 children with SEND, 2 = 1 child with SEND, 3 = 2 or more children with SEND; <sup>e</sup>0 = No exposure to inclusion, 1 = Exposure to inclusion.

The multiple linear regression also indicated that exposure to inclusion was the strongest predictor of PA towards inclusion ( $\beta = -.21$ ), followed by education levels ( $\beta = -.20$ ) and then the number of children with SEND in the household ( $\beta = -.18$ ).

#### **Gender**

The regression indicated that gender was not a significant predictor of PA towards inclusion,  $\beta = -.02, t(194) = -.32, p = .75$ .

#### **Income**

The regression indicated that income was not a significant predictor of PA towards inclusion,  $\beta = .07, t(194) = .95, p = .34$ .

#### **Education level**

Parental education level significantly predicted PA towards inclusion,  $\beta = -.20, t(194) = -2.71, p = .007$ . A higher education level predicted a 2.51 points decrease in the total attitude score,  $B = -2.51$ , indicating a more positive attitude towards inclusion.

#### **Exposure to inclusion**

Exposure to inclusion was found to be a significant predictor of PA score,  $\beta = -.21, t(194) = -2.87, p = .004$ . Those parents who had exposure to inclusive settings, meaning those who had either TD children in an inclusive



classroom or children with SEND, had a 3.73 points decrease in the attitude score,  $B = -3.73$ , indicating a more positive attitude towards inclusion.

#### ***Number of children with SEND in the household***

The number of children with SEND in the household was also a significant predictor of PA,  $\beta = -.18$ ,  $t(194) = -2.45$ ,  $p = .015$ . One additional child with SEND in the household would lead to a 4.17 points drop in the attitude score,  $B = -4.17$ , meaning a more positive attitude toward inclusion.

### **Discussion**

This study aimed to investigate predictors of PA towards inclusion in China by examining and comparing different variables including parental gender, income, education level, exposure to inclusion and the number of children with SEND in the household. It was hypothesized that all these independent variables would have an impact on PA towards inclusion. Although the study results showed that a higher parental education level, more exposure to inclusion and more SEND children in the household significantly predicted more positive attitudes towards inclusion, parental gender and income did not have a statistically significant impact on their attitudes towards inclusion. Among the significant predictors, exposure to inclusion was the strongest predictor, followed by education level and then the number of children with SEND in the household. Overall, this study's hypothesis was partially met.

The statistically non-significant relationship between parental gender and their attitudes towards inclusion adds to the inconsistency of previous studies in both Western (Lüke & Grosche, 2017) and Chinese contexts (Liu & Deng, 2018; Lui et al., 2015; Zheng, 2017). We speculate that this inconsistency might be due to the use of different instruments among studies, which covered different aspects of attitudes. None of these quantitative studies, including the current one, could provide a concrete explanation.

The statistically insignificant relationship between income level and PA towards inclusion is at odds with previous studies showing Western parents with higher socioeconomic status held more positive attitudes towards inclusion (de Boer et al., 2010). The reason for such inconsistency might be rooted in the cultural difference between China and the West. Education was held highly in the Confucius tradition and everyone was considered educable with no distinction of class (Qu, 2022). The current results seem promising that income levels and class differences might not be so much of a barrier to the promotion of inclusion in China. Certain aspects of the Confucius tradition could also be better harnessed to provide the moral strength and philosophical underpinning for inclusion (Qu, 2022). That said, this is only the first study to-date that examined the predictive ability of income on PA towards inclusion in China. Future studies could investigate this further using qualitative designs such as interviews to provide a more in-depth explanation.

Since education is a concept that is often linked to income level, the result that only parental education level, not income, was a significant predictor of more positive attitudes towards inclusion seemed intriguing. The significance of education level as a predictor is consistent with one previous Chinese study (Su et al., 2020) and a meta-analysis of Western studies (de Boer et al., 2010). It is possible that parents with higher education levels had more exposure to and understanding of the idea of SEND and inclusion. This result provided a positive outlook towards inclusion in China as more people are receiving higher education. However, the results of the current study disagree with one previous study showing that Chinese parents with higher education levels were more critical of the practicality of inclusion (Zheng, 2017). This discrepancy between Zheng's and the current study might be attributed to the different sampling locations. Since Zheng's study only recruited participants from Tianjin, China, its results might be representative of the parental characteristics and state of inclusive education in that particular city. In contrast, the current study recruited participants online without any restriction on their place of residence, which could potentially reflect a more general picture of the relationship between parental education levels and their attitudes towards inclusion across China.

On top of parental education level, this study also revealed that parents who had more exposure to inclusion also had more positive attitudes towards inclusion. This is largely consistent with previous studies across different cultural contexts (Paseka & Schwab, 2020; Su et al., 2020), which further bolstered the idea that experiences shape attitudes (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). This study is also the first study that compared various predictors and

demonstrated that parental exposure to inclusion was the most significant predictor of positive attitudes towards inclusion. Although no causality was warranted, any measure to enrich parental experiences with inclusion could still be beneficial. This could be done through the enrolment of more children with SEND in mainstream classrooms provided with appropriate support and an improved collaboration system between SEND families and mainstream schools. Future studies might also consider how home-school collaboration programs could enrich such experiences of exposure to inclusion and how that could have an impact on PA towards inclusion.

Furthermore, the result that more children with SEND in the household predicted more positive attitudes towards inclusion is largely coherent with previous studies of Chinese parents (Liu & Deng, 2018; Niu et al., 2005; Su et al., 2014; Su et al., 2020). Nonetheless, they conflicted with a Western review showing that parents of TD children were more positive towards inclusion (de Boer et al., 2010). This discrepancy could be due to differences in the state of inclusion between the Western and Chinese contexts. As aforementioned, Western parents of SEND children were less positive toward inclusion compared to parents of TD children due to their concerns over the quality of inclusion such as the social inclusion of their children (de Boer et al., 2010). In contrast, Chinese parents have been striving to ensure their children's access to inclusive settings, making the quality of inclusion a somewhat second priority. Although the Chinese government largely encourages the practice of LRC and the education system is gradually becoming more inclusive, there are still minimal policy interventions in place to ensure every child with SEND's access to mainstream classrooms, especially for those children who require more support such as those with ASD or more profound physical disabilities (Cui, 2016). In practice, children with SEND still face denial and discrimination in their access to mainstream schools, and parents are made the strongest force to safeguard the rights of their children. Therefore, stricter, and more concrete interventions from the government are required to bridge the difference between policies and practices and to prevent any leeway for exclusion and discrimination. Local education authorities should also be open and responsive to the needs and concerns of parents during their decision-making process. See Cui (2016) for some collective, bottom-up efforts that have already been made in Guangdong province of China to establish better collaboration between a SEND parental group and government agencies.

That said, the contrasting attitudes between Western and Chinese SEND parents towards inclusion could also be attributed to their differences in generations. De Boer et al.'s study (2010) reviewed Western studies between the late 1990s and early 2000s and more recent studies in the Western context rarely compared attitudes between parents of TD children and children with SEND. On the contrary, studies on PA in China were mostly conducted in the recent decade. Given that the public awareness, policies and practices of inclusion are changing, generational differences could contribute to differences in attitudes towards inclusion.

Despite its relevance, this study is not without limitations. One pitfall of this study was in the questionnaire design. When asking about children's school settings, the options were either special or mainstream provisions. These did not generalise to parents whose children were receiving interventions at home or at private agencies, children who were below and beyond school ages and those who were out of schools for any other reasons. This might be one of the reasons for the high dropout rates of the questionnaire. Another limitation of this study is the social-desirability biases. As one previous experiment has demonstrated, participants tend to favour inclusion when the perceived attitudes of the researchers or institutions were positive (Lüke & Grosche, 2017). The fact that participants of the current study were aware that this study was conducted by researchers who were in an educational institution and were interested in inclusive education might negatively impact the validity of this study. Furthermore, this study also did not distinguish parents of children with different types of needs and disabilities, partially out of considerations of recruitment difficulties. However, previous studies have demonstrated that types of disabilities of children might have an impact on PA towards inclusion (Niu et al., 2005; Paseka & Schwab, 2020). More recently, another study examined Chinese SEND parents' stress levels during the COVID-19 (Cheng et al., 2021). The results showed that types of children's disabilities were related to parental levels of COVID-induced stress, and this COVID-induced stress was negatively correlated to parental view on their children's school success. Considering that this study was conducted during COVID, participants could have varying needs and concerns about their children's education depending on their child's type of disability. Although this study is valuable in providing a general picture of predictors of PA toward inclusion, it should be used with caution to make any references to parents of children with a particular type of disability.

Based on the above limitations, future studies are advised to first consider the diversity of education provisions and modify the school setting question by including more options or asking the participants to self-declare their

children's provisions. Secondly, future studies could try to control the social desirability biases by providing more neutral statements when introducing the attitude of the researcher or the institute. Thirdly, future work might compare the attitude of parents of children with different types of disabilities towards inclusion. This comparison could reveal how attitudes differ between parents and how the education system could be improved to adapt to children with diverse needs and disabilities.

To conclude, this study showed that increases in parental education level, exposure to inclusion and the number of children with SEND in the household significantly predicted more positive PA towards inclusion. Among them, exposure to inclusion was the most significant predictor, followed by education level and then the number of children with SEND in the household. Despite some limitations, this study is the first large-sample study that looked into income as a predictor and compared various predictors of PA towards inclusion in China. The findings started to fill the current gaps in the literature and improved the understanding of the state of inclusion in China. This study calls for more concrete policy interventions from the government to ensure the enrolment of children with SEND in the mainstream classroom. Moreover, an improved collaboration system between families and mainstream schools and partnerships between local authorities and families of children with SEND are suggested. Most importantly, this study recognises that China still has a long way to go in exploring and establishing its own inclusive education, which is adaptive to its social, economic and cultural context, in the form of LRC. Even though LRC largely improved the access to inclusion, the quality of LRC would only be enhanced with better teacher training and collaboration between the mainstream and special education systems. The road to inclusion is no doubt an arduous one that might involve many trials and errors. Nevertheless, some promising results and improvements that have already been witnessed to date could serve as a beacon of hope for any future efforts to make the system a more inclusive one for children with SEND and for all.

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