

Pre-service Teachers' Values and Classroom Management Styles for Inclusive Education: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract: This study aims to explore pre-service teachers' classroom management styles and investigate their relationship with their value priorities. Specifically, starting from the Theory of the Universal Structure of Human Values (Schwartz & Cieciuch, 2021), it is hypothesized that the value dimensions of Self-Transcendence and Openness to Change correlate positively with the authoritative management style of teachers (Kearney, 2008). The research involved 715 pre-service teachers (M=276/F=439) enrolled in the University of Salerno's TFA support specialization course (Italy) in the academic year 2022/2023. The Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ-RR) (Schwartz et al., 2012) and the Classroom Management Profile (Kearney, 2008) were administered. The statistical analysis using Multiple Linear Regression confirms a significant positive relationship between the variables. The results of this study suggest considering classroom management styles and values in professional development programs for implementing inclusive educational policies (Ianniello et al., 2022) and considering training opportunities for future teachers (Aiello, 2019).

Keywords: Teacher's Values; Classroom Management Styles; Inclusive Education; Special Pedagogy.



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1. Classroom Management Styles for Inclusive Education? Current problems, definition, and meaning.

Inclusive education practices are becoming increasingly widespread worldwide (Ydo, 2020). Teachers are called upon to guarantee equal access to education, participation, and learning opportunities to *each and every one*, structuring flexible, adaptable, and personalized (Aiello & Sharma, 2018).

A growing body of research literature suggests, however, that many teachers have negative attitudes toward inclusion because they feel unprepared to teach students with special educational needs (Hemmings & Woodcock, 2011; Sadioglu et al., 2013; Civitillo et al., 2016). Such research reveals that teachers' knowledge of inclusion is insufficient (Sucuoğlu et al., 2014; Thaver & Lim, 2012), as is the theoretical and practical information on managing student problem behaviors (Mitchem & Wells, 2002; Yildiz, 2015). The analysis of several studies on inclusive education practices highlights teachers' low perceptions of self-efficacy regarding their classroom management skills, resulting in withdrawal and avoidance behaviors, low performance, or failure (Lazarides et al., 2020). Since a well-managed classroom

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Prof. Ali Musleh Alodat is the Scientific Supervisor of the Research.

supports everyone's academic and social development, contributing to students' educational success, “*what to do*” to prevent and manage difficult behavioral situations while valuing everyone's differences is constantly examined by teachers (D’Alonzo, 2020). Classroom management includes everything the teacher implements to promote pupils' interest and participation, including methods and strategies to offer adequate and effective responses to design and organize a positive classroom environment (Marzano et al., 2003). A learning environment for inclusive classes, which is well managed, with clear structures and routines, is the fundamental condition for supporting and enhancing the skills of *each* student (D’Alonzo, 2020), respecting their *different* needs (Corona, 2014).

To navigate complex classroom dynamics, teachers can adopt various management styles. *Classroom management styles*, understood as the degree and type of involvement and 'control' of teachers over students, can significantly influence students' behavior, learning, and motivation to study (Wong & Wong, 2014). The management style adopted by the teacher can help maximize student learning, the level of participation in activities, and positive peer relationships, as well as minimize the manifestation of inappropriate, maladaptive, or disturbing behaviors (Gaías et al., 2019). It can, therefore, influence the educational experience of students *tout court* and inclusive leadership (Carneiro et al., 2015).

Kearney (2008), drawing on research from different cultural and educational contexts, classifies classroom management styles into three main categories: *authoritarian*, *authoritative*, and *permissive*. By analyzing different styles, the scholar offers a broad perspective on how teachers around the world face the challenge of creating effective and engaging learning environments that are related not only to academic performance but also to the socio-emotional well-being of students.

- 1) For Kearney (2008), the *authoritarian classroom management style* is characterized by rigid rules and clear expectations, leaving little opportunity for students to receive feedback or give input. This style emphasizes order and discipline and maximizes efficiency in time management in school but can limit and inhibit both the development of critical thinking and student autonomy (Emmer & Sabornie, 2014). Teachers who adopt an authoritarian style use a relatively rigid approach toward students in relational methods, devoid of affection. Students are forced to undergo cognitive and operational rhythms that are not shared. Not having the possibility to question the teacher's work, express themselves, and have their free will to implement, they live the school experience with uneasiness (D’Alonzo, 2020). In different international contexts, the effectiveness of this style varies considerably, suggesting that its applicability may be limited by cultural and social factors (Hofstede, 2001).
- 2) Instead, the *authoritative style* emphasizes collaboration and communication between teachers and students (Kearney, 2008). Teachers who adopt this style promote student autonomy, encouraging active participation and personal responsibility in learning (Thi & Nguyen, 2021). The authoritative style encourages two-way feedback and student involvement in setting classroom rules and goals. It is related to improving students' intrinsic motivation and social skills (Thi & Nguyen, 2021). Likewise, studies by Obispo et. al. (2021) suggest that the authoritative style positively affects student engagement and the quality of learning, although it requires highly qualified and flexible teachers.
- 3) The *permissive management style* is characterized by its permissive nature, with minimal teacher interference in students' activities (Kearney, 2008).

Evertson & Weinstein (2006) argue that this style can promote autonomy. However, numerous studies have indicated that it can also lead to a lack of classroom control and poorer learning outcomes (Kounin, 1970). Characterized by a high degree of freedom for students, the permissive style offers students the autonomy to manage their learning process, placing few demands on students. Therefore, although it can promote independence, this style can only generate a disorganized classroom environment with adequate support and guidance (Gage et al., 2018). Lewis's (2001) comparative research suggests that the effectiveness of the permissive style is highly dependent on students' maturity and independence, varying significantly across different cultural contexts (Roache & Lewis, 2011; Achonu et al., 2019).

International literature suggests that no classroom management style is better than another and universally applicable. Instead, the effectiveness of a style depends on several contextual factors, including school culture, student characteristics, and teacher preferences. Teachers should be flexible and adapt their management approach according to the specific needs of their classroom and the educational context in which they work (Goddard et al., 2015). However, Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, and Curran (2004) highlight how authoritative teachers are particularly effective in creating learning environments that respect and value differences, promoting a sense of community and belonging, less performance-related anxiety, and better problem-solving skills. These aspects are essential to promoting *inclusive education*, as they reduce barriers to learning (Soodak, 2003). Ainscow, Booth, and Dyson (2006) highlighted how schools must adopt a systematic approach to inclusion, recognizing the importance of leadership in promoting educational equity and reflecting the authoritative classroom management style. A growing body of literature suggests that classroom management styles teachers adopt are related to various contextual and personal factors (Obispo et al. 2021). However, more studies are needed to consider the influence of *value priorities* on the management style adopted by teachers.

1.1 Pre-Service Teachers' Value System: An Overview of Schwartz's Theory.

A vast scientific literature suggests that teachers' values, guiding principles of actions, behaviors, and perceptions influence their practices, conditioning the teaching-learning process (Schwartz & Cieciuch, 2021). Values are defined as trans-situational goals that express what people consider important and guide behavior toward desirable goals (Schwartz & Butenko, 2014). Having a motivational and prescriptive function, they play a central role in the process of self-regulation and self-determination, with repercussions and implications for the teaching action of teachers (Di Gennaro et al. 2017; Corona & De Giuseppe, 2021). More precisely, for Shalom H. Schwartz (2012), the *value priorities* - the values to which teachers attribute greater value - guide their actions, conditioning how they think and act. A body of scientific research has explored the impact of value priorities on teachers' curricular, organizational, and didactic decisions (Behets & Vergauwen, 2004; Gillespie, 2011). Specifically, the study by Wentzel (2002) and Bassett et al. (2013) suggests that value priorities shape teaching styles relevant to sustaining student interest and setting high academic standards. For Pudelko and Boon (2014) and Rechter and Sverdlik (2016), value priorities guide the choices underlying educational actions and influence attitudes toward learners' activities. For Snook (2003), teachers' value priorities are reflected in the choice of topics and the explanation of the

lesson's contents in the classroom. Also, for Ames (1984) and Lopes & Santos (2012), values guide the pedagogical choices and operational objectives that the teacher aims to achieve: through learning expectations, rewards, and positive reinforcements, teachers communicate what is most important (value) for them. Unsurprisingly, countless scientific studies highlight the role of teachers' values in influencing students' learning and involvement, motivation, results achieved, and future educational prospects (Gamage et. al. 2021).

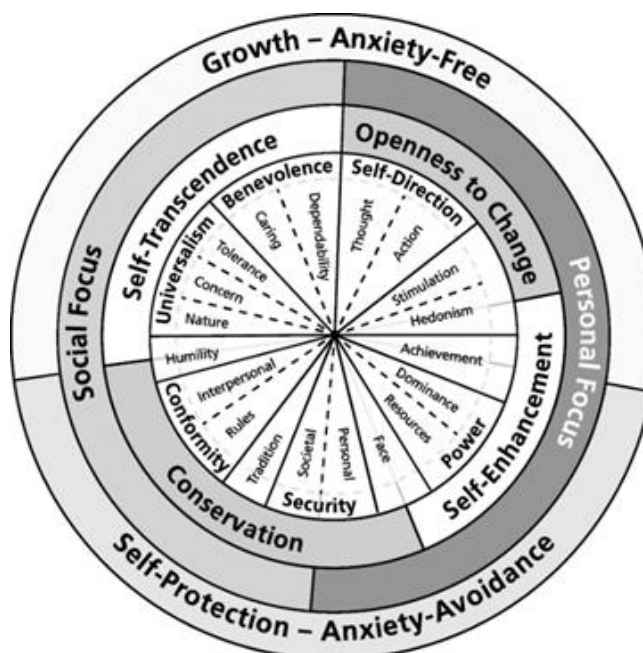
Shalom H. Schwartz (2012) defines the existence of a taxonomy of trans-cultural values through the elaboration of the *Theory of the Universal Structure of Human Values*. The author identifies four value dimensions defined as *Higher Order Values*: 1) *Self-transcendence*, 2) *Conservation*, 3) *Self-enhancement* 4) *Openness to Change*. Ten fundamental values are articulated from the four value dimensions, the so-called Original Values, some of which are subsequently divided/refined into 19 overall values (Fig. 1) (Schwartz & Cieciuch, 2021). The 19 values identified by the author fit into a circular model, placed based on the compatibility/similarity of the type of motivational objective they express. The motivational content of a value refers to the direction in which the value directs people's perceptions and decisions. Thus, adjacent value dimensions are related, and non-adjacent ones represent opposite value domains. By way of example, according to this principle, anyone who is oriented towards the "Conservation" dimension of values, towards preserving traditional practices, stability, and security in relationships with the surrounding environment, will be led to adopt behaviors towards themselves and others which will result in clear contrast with actions based on the values of the value dimension of "Openness to change", which presuppose independence of thought, action, and feelings, as well as availability to change (Schwartz & Cieciuch, 2021).

The outermost circle of the circular model represented in Fig. 2 divides the values into two large groups: those relating to the avoidance of anxiety and oriented towards self-protection (lower half - self-protection) and those relating to development personal, to growth as self-expansion (upper half - growth self-expansion). In the next concentric circle, Schwartz contrasts values with a personal focus (on the right), oriented towards individual results, and values with a social focus (on the left), inclined towards associated life, for the benefit of others or institutions (Schwartz et al., 2012).

Figure 1. Re-elaboration of the graphical representation of the taxonomy of human values.

Higher Order Values	Definition	10 Original Values	19 more narrowly defined Values
Self-Transcendence	Transcending one's selfish concerns and promoting the welfare of others and caring for nature.	<u>Universalism</u>	<u>Universalism - Tolerance</u> <u>Universalism – Concern</u> <u>Universalism -Nature</u> <u>Humility</u>
		<u>Benevolence</u>	<u>Benevolence - Dependability</u> <u>Benevolence – Caring</u>
Openness to change	Pursuing whatever intellectual or emotional directions one wishes, however unpredictable or uncertain the outcomes.	<u>Self-direction</u>	<u>Self-direction - Action</u> <u>Self-direction – Thought</u> <u>Face</u>
		<u>Stimulation</u>	<u>Stimulation</u>
Self-Enhancement	Enhancing one's own personal interests.	<u>Hedonism</u>	<u>Hedonism</u>
		<u>Power</u>	<u>Power - Resources</u> <u>Power - Dominance</u>
		<u>Achievement</u>	<u>Achievement</u>
Conservation	Preserving the status quo and its certainty in relationships with close others, institutions, and traditions.	<u>Conformity</u>	<u>Conformity - Interpersonal</u> <u>Conformity – Rules</u>
		<u>Tradition</u>	<u>Tradition</u>
		<u>Security</u>	<u>Security - Societal</u> <u>Security - Personal</u>

Figure 2. Circular Motivational Values in Schwartz's Values Theory.



*The "Hedonism" value also falls within the Self-Enhancement dimension.

2. Materials and Methods

This study aims to explore pre-service teachers' classroom management styles and investigate their relationship with their value priorities. Starting from the Theory of the Universal Structure of Human Values (Schwartz et al., 2012), the research explored the relationships between the four Higher Order Values (Self-transcendence, Conservation, Self-enhancement, Openness to change) and Classroom Management Styles (Authoritarian, Authoritative, and Permissive) by Kearney (2008). It is hypothesized that the value dimensions of Self-Transcendence and Openness toward Change correlate positively with the authoritative management style of teachers.

Study variables were described in terms of means, standard deviations, and ranges. A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted using a statistical technique representing an extension of the simple regression model. A simple random sampling technique was adopted to construct the population for the present study. The sample size includes a group of 715 pre-service teachers (M=276/F=439) enrolled in the University of Salerno's TFA support specialization course (Italy) in the academic year 2022/2023. The participants belong to all school levels and levels: Preschool, Primary School, Lower Secondary School, and Upper Secondary School.

All the participants signed the informed consent form and were assured of respect for their privacy. As graphically represented below, each participant provided a series of socio-demographic information: gender, age, province of origin, and school order (Fig.3). The demographic characteristics of the sample are reported below. Data collection for the current study took two weeks.

Table. 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample.

Variable	Subcategory	Percentage	N.
Gender	Male	38.60%	276
	Female	61.40%	439
Age Group	21 – 29	9.93%	71
	30 – 39	31.33%	224
	40 – 49	49.23%	352
	50 – 59	9.23%	66
	60 years and older	0.28%	2
Marital Status	Married	70.49%	504
	Single	28.81%	206
Province	Napoli	25.73%	184
	Salerno	42.10%	301
	Benevento	6.71%	48
	Caserta	5.45%	39
Educational Stage/ Grade Level	Avellino	19.30%	138
	Preschool	6.43%	46
	Primary School	22.94%	164
	Lower Secondary School	27.69%	198
Education Level	Upper Secondary School	42.24%	302
	High school diploma	6.43%	46
	Bachelor's Master's degree	92.73%	663
	PhD	0.14%	1

2.1 Tools – PVQ-RR/CMP

Given the objective, the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ-RR) (Schwartz et al., 2012) and the Classroom Management Profile (Kearney, 2008) were administered. Both questionnaires were administered remotely, as foreseen by the tools' indications, using Google Forms as an alternative to the projective paper and pencil technique.

Portrait Value Questionnaire (PVQ-RR)

The Portrait Value Questionnaire (PVQ-RR), which consists of 57 items, was used to explore the participants' value priorities (Schwartz et al., 2012).

Three items measure each of the 19 values. Each item consists of one sentence that describes a different person in terms of the goals, aspirations or wishes he or she considers essential in life. For example, "It is important to him that every person in the world have equal opportunities in life" (item 37) or "It is important to him to be very successful" (item 32). Respondents compare the person described to themselves and rate how similar the person is to them on a 6-point labeled scale (from 1 = not at all like me to 6 = very similar to me) (Schwartz et al., 2012). Four average indices were calculated that evaluate the importance personally given to conservation ($\alpha = 0.66$), openness to change ($\alpha = 0.68$), self-transcendence ($\alpha = 0.61$), and self-enhancement ($\alpha = 0.75$).

Classroom Management Profile (CMP)

To explore the classroom management style of the group of pre-service teachers, the Classroom Management Profile (Kearney, 2008) was administered, considering nine items and three subscales (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive). Respondents were asked to respond on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Below, by way of example, are two examples of items: 1. If a student is disruptive during class, I assign him/her to detention without further discussion (authoritarian style); 2. My students understand that they can interrupt my lecture if

they have a relevant question (authoritative style). Three average indices were calculated evaluating the authoritative ($\alpha = 0.62$), authoritarian ($\alpha = 0.66$), and permissive ($\alpha = 0.61$) management styles.

3. Results

The study's results show that the value priorities of the sample of 715 pre-service teachers (M=276/F=439) are directed towards the value dimension of Self-transcendence, followed by the macro-value dimensions of Openness to change, Conservation, and Self-enhancement.

The interpretation of the β coefficients suggests that participants' personal values were more associated with authoritative and authoritarian management styles; these values were not significantly correlated with the permissive style of classroom management. The Multiple Regression predictors produced an $R^2 = 0.21$ for the authoritative style, an $R^2 = 0.18$ for the authoritarian style, and an $R^2 = 0.07$ for the permissive style. The authoritative style of classroom management would, therefore, seem to be guided by value dimensions inclined towards understanding and acceptance of others. In contrast, the authoritarian classroom management style would seem to be supported by values that have a personal focus and are oriented towards individual results. A permissive teaching style was weakly related to teachers' values. In line with the studies of Pudelko and Boon (2014) and Barni et al. (2018), the research results suggest that the more teachers' value priorities were directed towards the value dimension of Conservation, the more these teachers supported an authoritarian style of classroom management. Likewise, the more they identified with the values of the value dimension of Self-transcendence and Openness to change, the more they were inclined to adopt an authoritative classroom management style. The less they addressed the macro-value dimension of Self-enhancement, the more authoritative they were. The observations include the involvement of a sample from the Campania region and refer to a group that does not constitute a representative sample of the population of Italian teachers. However, the number of observations (=715) reduces potential bias and considers the data obtained significantly.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the study variables and their correlations.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Personal values							
(1) Conservation	1	0.12	0.32**	0.26*	-0.02	0.25**	-0.08
(2) Openness to Change		1	0.18*	0.49**	0.21*	0.20*	0.01
(3) Self-Transcendence			1	-0.03	0.33**	-0.04	0.12
(4) Self-Enhancement				1	-0.07*	0.24**	-0.10
Classroom management styles							
(5) Authoritative Style					1	0.03	-0.08
(6) Authoritarian Style						1	-0.14
(7) Permissive Style							1
Mean	3.84	3.86	4.71	2.56	4.66	2.67	2.75
Standard Deviations	0.61	0.58	0.34	0.89	0.35	0.67	0.95
Range	1.70 - 5.50	2.20 - 5.65	2.80 - 6.00	1.75 - 4.92	2.75 - 5.60	1.50-5.00	1.25-4.30

**p < 0.01, *p < 0.05.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Classroom management styles, as well as teachers' value priorities, are a crucial component of the educational experience, with a significant impact on the educational success of *each and everyone* (Uibu & Kikas, 2014; Ianniello & Corona, 2023). The research results show a significant positive relationship between the variables examined. The impact of value priorities in determining classroom management styles is more significant in the case of authoritative and authoritarian styles than in the permissive style. In line with the study's hypothesis, the value dimensions of Self-Transcendence and Openness towards Change seem to correlate positively with the authoritative management style of teachers (Kearney, 2008). Promoting these values and management style would appear to support the creation of more inclusive and welcoming school environments in which every student would have the opportunity to participate fully in education (Mergler et al., 2016; Corona, 2019). These results underline the need to structure teacher training programs that promote informative and practical activities, starting from a reflection on the awareness of personal value priorities and one's classroom management style (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). Professional development programs should support values oriented towards Self-transcendence and Openness to change, promoting authoritative leadership skills (Mergler et al., 2016; Sibilio & Aiello, 2015).

Since the value priorities of some pre-service teachers have been directed towards the value dimension of Conservatism, which is positively correlated to the authoritarian management style, the possibility that these value priorities could create resistance to an inclusive educational framework should be made explicit in teacher training courses to allow them to rethink and relocate the value of their priorities.

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of teachers' personal values and classroom management styles and suggests their inclusion in teacher training

programs for the implementation of inclusive educational policies. Very few studies have focused on the relationship between teachers' values and classroom management styles, especially about inclusive education. In this sense, this research attempts to fill the lack of national and international scientific literature studies. At the same time, the study has some limitations. It is not excluded that these results may have been invalidated by potential social desirability biases that reside mainly in the willingness of future teachers to adhere to the most accredited theoretical frameworks.

Furthermore, more than the multiple linear regression analysis was needed to allow us to understand the specific contribution of each value (of the 19 in total) in explaining the teachers' classroom management style. Finally, it would be interesting to replicate the research with a sample of in-service teachers to verify the possible presence of differences in the results. Therefore, further exploratory and confirmatory research will be needed in the future.

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