

Artificial Intelligence Use in Special Education: Hidden Needs Reflected Through Questions

Soruların Aynasından: Özel Eğitimde Yapay Zekâ Kullanımı ve Örtük İhtiyaçlar

Bahadır İNAN* 

Hilal GENGEÇ** 

Received: 1 March 2026

Research Article

Accepted: 24 June 2026

ABSTRACT: This study examines the professional needs of special education teachers as reflected in AI-generated responses to a systematically developed set of questions, within the framework of Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). Rather than consulting teachers directly, the study analyzes the outputs of six AI-based conversational tools in order to reveal the cognitive, emotional, social, and professional gratifications underlying teacher-AI interactions in special education contexts. The study was conducted using an exploratory and interpretive qualitative research design. Data were collected through document analysis of AI-generated responses to 20 systematically selected questions and analyzed using an inductive analytical approach. The analysis was structured within the theoretical framework of UGT. The findings indicate that teachers' interaction with AI tools reflect not only information-seeking but also efforts to reduce uncertainty, seek ethical validation, achieve emotional relief, alleviate professional isolation, and share responsibility. In addition, the questions primarily focused on inclusive education, behavior management, Individualized Education Program (IEP) processes, and ethical decision-making. The results demonstrate that AI-based digital counseling tools function as sources of emotional and professional support for teachers, alongside their pedagogical role. The study offers implications for incorporating the ethical and pedagogical dimensions of AI into teacher education and in-service support systems.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, special education, digital counseling, uses and gratifications theory, teacher experience.

ÖZ: Bu çalışma, özel eğitim bağlamında sistematik biçimde geliştirilen sorulara yapay zekâ (yz) araçlarının ürettiği yanıtları, Kullanımlar ve Doyumlar Teorisi çerçevesinde incelemektedir. Öğretmenlerle doğrudan görüşme yapılmamış; bunun yerine altı yapay zekâ tabanlı sohbet aracının çıktıları analiz edilerek öğretmen-YZ etkileşimlerinin altında yatan bilişsel, duygusal, sosyal ve mesleki doyumlar ortaya konmaya çalışılmıştır. Araştırma, keşfedici ve yorumlayıcı nitel bir desen ile yürütülmüştür. Veriler, sistematik seçim süreciyle belirlenen 20 soruya verilen yapay zekâ yanıtlarının doküman incelemesiyle toplanmış ve tümevarımsal analiz tekniğiyle çözümlenmiştir. Bulgular, öğretmenlerin yapay zekâ araçlarıyla etkileşimlerinin yalnızca bilgi arayışını değil; belirsizliği azaltma, etik onay arayışı, duygusal rahatlama, mesleki yalnızlığı giderme ve sorumluluk paylaşımını da yansıttığını göstermektedir. Soruların kapsayıcı eğitim, davranış yönetimi, Bireyselleştirilmiş Eğitim Programı (BEP) süreçleri ve etik karar verme alanlarında yoğunlaştığı belirlenmiştir. Sonuçlar, yapay zekâ tabanlı dijital danışmanlık araçlarının öğretmenler için pedagojik işlevinin yanı sıra duygusal ve mesleki destek kaynağı olarak da işlev gördüğünü ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışma, yapay zekânın etik ve pedagojik boyutlarının öğretmen yetiştirme ve hizmet içi destek sistemlerine entegrasyonuna yönelik çıkarımlar sunmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Yapay zekâ, özel eğitim, dijital danışmanlık, kullanımlar ve doyumlar teorisi, öğretmen deneyimi.

* Corresponding Author: Asst. Prof. Dr., Yozgat Bozok University, Yozgat, Türkiye, bahadirr.inan@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2952-5455>

** Asst. Prof. Dr., Gaziantep University, Gaziantep, Türkiye, gengechilal@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8723-6857>

Citation Information

İnan, B., & Gengeç, H. (2026). Artificial intelligence use in special education: Hidden needs reflected through questions. *Kuramsal Eğitimbilim Dergisi [Journal of Theoretical Educational Sciences]*, 19(4), 938-968. <http://doi.org/10.30831/akukeg.1900534>

The use of digital technologies in education has increased rapidly in recent years, with artificial intelligence (AI)-based tools exerting broad influence across instructional processes, assessment practices, teacher professional development, and student support services (Holmes, 2020; Luckin et al., 2022). Within educational contexts, AI is predominantly discussed in relation to learning analytics, adaptive instructional systems, and the enhancement of academic performance, while teachers' interactions with these tools are typically evaluated in terms of technical competencies and pedagogical outcomes (Selwyn, 2022). Emerging research specifically focused on special education contexts has further demonstrated that AI tools hold significant potential for reducing teacher workload, supporting Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)-related tasks, and enhancing instructional planning (Goldman et al., 2024; Naatz & Ruppar, 2026). However, particularly in special education settings, teachers' engagement with digital tools cannot be reduced to cognitive or technical needs alone; rather, such interactions increasingly appear intertwined with emotional, ethical, and professional meaning-making processes.

Teachers in inclusive classrooms face multilayered demands, including increasing student diversity, intensive individualization, behavioral intervention needs, and expectations from families and school administrators (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Brunsting et al., 2014). In this context, teachers seek answers not only to the question "What should I do?" but also to implicit concerns such as "Is this the right decision?", "Am I doing enough?", and "Am I solely responsible for this outcome?" (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). The literature indicates that teacher burnout is associated not only with workload but also with uncertainty, role conflict, and perceived lack of support (Aloe et al., 2014; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Recent studies confirm that special education teachers are particularly vulnerable to emotional exhaustion due to the compounding effects of intensive emotional labor and limited institutional support (Ruble et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2025). These findings suggest that emotional regulation and ethical validation are as central to teachers' decision-making processes as technical knowledge.

In recent years, AI-based conversational systems and digital counseling tools have emerged as accessible and immediate support resources for teachers. Beyond offering instructional strategies, these tools generate discursive frameworks that justify decisions, reduce uncertainty, and structure pedagogical reasoning (Holmes & Tuomi, 2022). Nevertheless, existing research largely conceptualizes teachers' inquiries directed to AI as problem-solving or information-seeking behaviors, paying limited attention to the professional and psychosocial needs underlying these questions (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). This gap is especially pronounced given that, despite growing AI adoption among educators more broadly, special education teachers remain in an exploratory phase of generative AI use, with many yet to integrate these tools systematically into their professional practice (Naatz & Ruppar, 2026). This gap is particularly evident in special education, where studies examining the specific gratifications teachers seek when using AI tools remain scarce.

Uses and Gratifications Theory provides a robust framework for understanding teacher-AI interactions. Developed by Katz et al. (1974), the theory posits that individuals actively use media and communication technologies to satisfy specific cognitive, emotional, social, and identity-related needs rather than consuming them passively. Rubin (2009) extended this perspective to digital and interactive

technologies. More recently, UGT has been applied to AI-based conversational agents and chatbot interactions, demonstrating that users seek not only informational but also emotional, social, and hedonic gratifications from such tools (Skjuve et al., 2024; Xie et al., 2024). In the context of educational technology, research suggests that teachers use digital tools not only to acquire information but also to reinforce professional competence, validate decisions, and obtain emotional reassurance (Hew & Brush, 2007; Trust et al., 2023). Consistent with this framework, the questions teachers direct to AI-based digital counseling tools may reflect efforts to reduce pedagogical uncertainty and support decision-making (Shulman, 1987), alleviate emotional burden and regulate professional anxiety (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), seek social support and mitigate professional isolation (Cobb, 1976), and affirm teacher identity and ethical judgment (Beijaard et al., 2004; Kelchtermans, 2005).

This theoretical perspective becomes even more critical in special education contexts. Decisions made in inclusive classrooms carry not only pedagogical but also ethical, legal, and emotional consequences (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Processes such as IEP, behavioral interventions, and instructional accommodations frequently confront teachers with concerns about fairness, adequacy of support, and fear of making mistakes (Friend & Bursuck, 2019). Yet, how teachers interpret AI-generated responses in such contexts-and which forms of gratification these responses provide-remains underexplored.

AI-supported digital counseling tools, particularly those based on large language models, offer distinctive digital environments characterized by contextual responsiveness and conversational interactivity. While capable of generating context-sensitive responses, these systems also carry risks of unpredictability or erroneous outputs (Li et al., 2023; Wach et al., 2023). Despite awareness of these limitations, individuals continue to use AI tools to meet diverse needs and purposes (Skjuve et al., 2024). In this study, AI-based conversational platforms are conceptualized as digital counseling environments to which teachers working with students with special educational needs turn in situations involving pedagogical uncertainty, ethical dilemmas, behavior management challenges, and professional isolation. The questions directed to AI are therefore treated not merely as requests for technical information but as naturally occurring data reflecting the search for professional assurance, decision validation, and emotional relief. The findings of this study are expected to deepen theoretical discussions on teacher-AI interaction within the field of educational technology and to offer new insights into the pedagogical and ethical positioning of digital counseling tools in special education.

The purpose of this study is to examine the professional needs of special education teachers as reflected in AI-generated responses to a systematically developed set of questions, within the framework of UGT, in order to reveal the cognitive, emotional, social, and professional gratifications underlying teacher-AI interactions in special education contexts. The study approaches these AI-generated responses not only in terms of content but also in relation to the uncertainties, ethical concerns, support needs, and experiences of professional isolation they represent. In this sense, AI use is positioned not as a purely technical interaction but as a multilayered practice embedded in teachers' professional experiences.

Accordingly, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- In which thematic domains do questions directed to AI tools within the field of special education predominantly cluster?
- What cognitive, emotional, ethical, and professional need patterns are reflected in the linguistic and contextual features of these questions?
- What structural deficiencies and support gaps in special education are indicated by the implicit factors embedded in frequently recurring question types?

Method

Research Design

This study is designed as a qualitative inquiry aiming to reveal the implicit professional needs underlying the questions directed to artificial intelligence (AI) tools in the field of special education, as well as the structural indicators associated with these needs. Qualitative research seeks to examine individuals' experiences and the meanings embedded within those experiences in depth (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In line with this perspective, researchers aim to construct meaningful relationships among codes, categories, and themes derived from the data and to organize findings in a systematic manner (Saldaña, 2016). The study employed document analysis, one of the qualitative research methods. In the present research, document analysis was conceptualized as the systematic examination of digitally produced texts naturally generated in online environments (i.e., user questions and AI-generated responses). In contexts where interviews or observations are not feasible, document analysis enables in-depth analysis of digital discourse and enhances data diversity (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). The study was conducted using an exploratory and interpretive approach. The data source consisted of naturally occurring user questions directed to AI-based digital counseling tools. These questions are considered naturalistic data because they were produced without researcher intervention and emerged from teachers' professional practices in contexts of uncertainty and need for support. The study was structured within the framework of UGT. However, this theoretical perspective was not used to predetermine analytical categories; rather, it served as a conceptual lens for interpreting the findings and understanding the professional needs that motivated teachers' use of AI tools.

Data Collection Process

The data collection process was structured in three main stages.

Stage 1: Identification and Rationale for AI Platforms

The AI platforms constituting the data production context of the study were identified based on the reports published by StatCounter Global Stats (2025), which list the most frequently used AI tools in Turkey (see Figure 1). Accordingly, the platforms included in the study were:

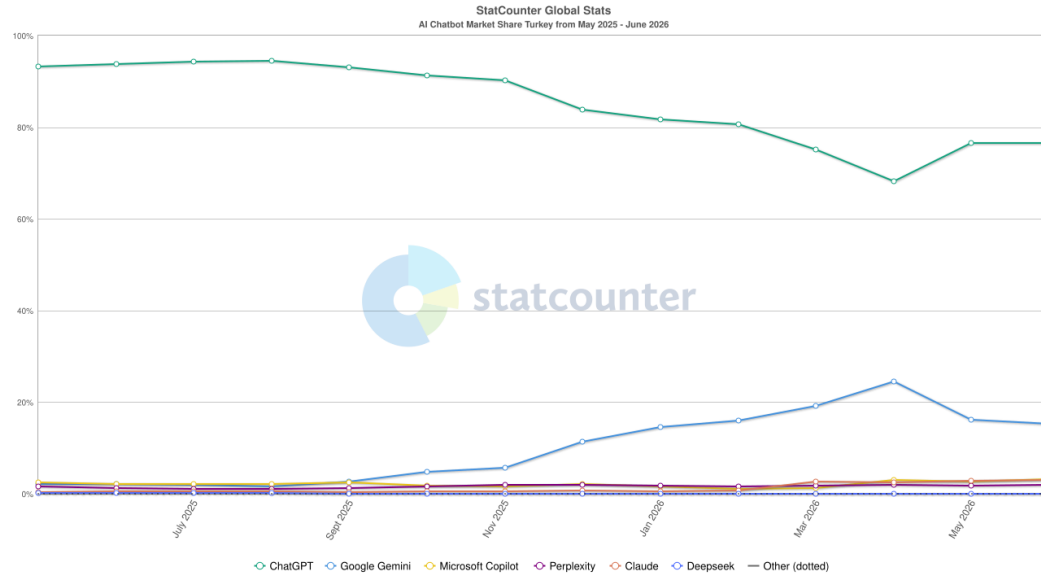
- ChatGPT
- Google Gemini
- Microsoft Copilot
- Perplexity
- Claude

- DeepSeek

These platforms were evaluated as the digital environments in which the questions and responses forming the data source of the study were generated.

Figure 1

The Most Used Artificial Intelligence Tools in Turkey-May 2026



According to the latest report (StatCounter, 2026), 76.77% of users in Turkey use ChatGPT, 16.06% use Google Gemini, 2.82% use Claude, 2.61% use Microsoft Copilot, 1.72% use Perplexity, and 0.02% use DeepSeek.

Stage 2: Rationale for Time Frame Selection and Natural Data Logic

The data collection period was defined as January-June 2025. This time frame represents a period in which the use of AI tools by individuals and institutions increased significantly and became visible in official statistics. According to data published by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK, 2025), approximately 19.2% of individuals in Turkey use AI-based tools. This proportion indicates an appropriate observational window for examining emerging usage patterns. Furthermore, recent reports suggest that teachers use AI tools regularly throughout the academic year, with approximately 32% reporting usage at least once per week (Gallup & Walton Family Foundation, 2025). However, no direct academic study has examined whether AI tool usage in special education intensifies during specific periods of the year.

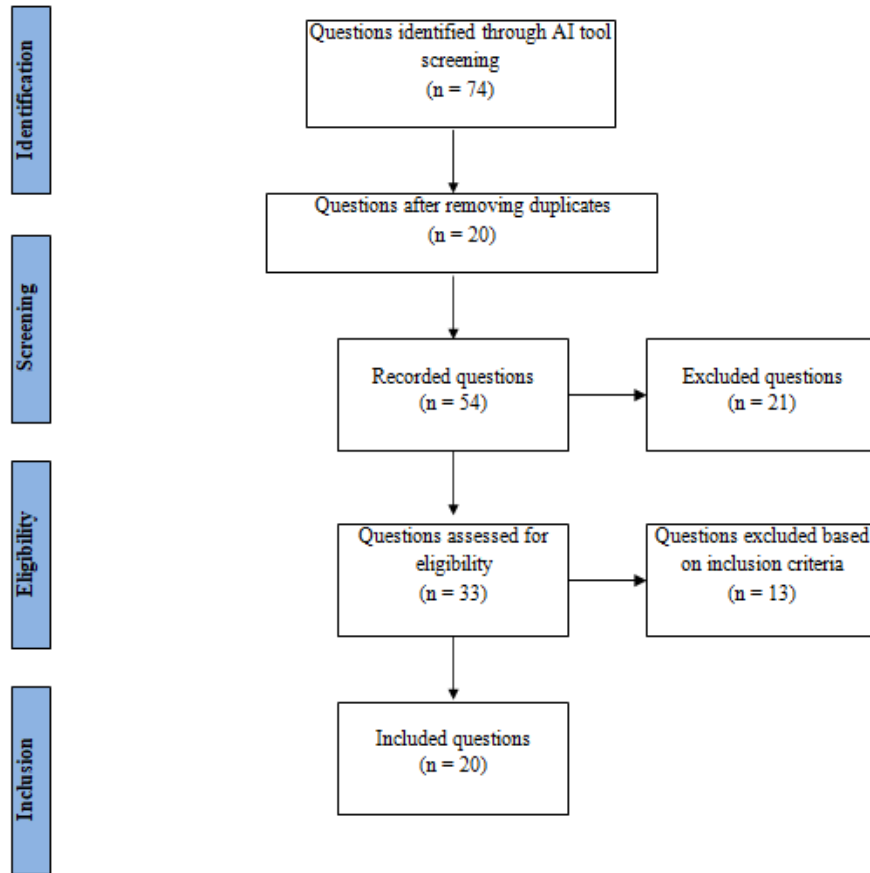
The primary rationale for selecting the January-June period lies in its representation of the active instructional phase of the academic year in Turkey. During this period, teachers are engaged in ongoing classroom practices, including assessment procedures, instructional adaptations, behavior management, and processes related to the Guidance and Research Centers (RAM). Therefore, questions directed to AI tools during this time are considered to reflect teachers' real-time professional challenges and urgent support needs. In contrast, preliminary observations indicate that during the July-December period-particularly due to the summer break-questions tend to focus more on general information or planning-oriented topics. The natural data approach adopted in this study assumes that questions generated during moments of professional strain provide richer insight into teachers' emotional intensity, uncertainty, and decision-

making processes. For this reason, the first six months of the year were evaluated as a data source capable of more deeply reflecting teachers' lived professional experiences.

Stage 3: Development of the Question Pool and Systematic Screening

At this stage of the study, the primary objective was to identify the types of questions teachers most frequently direct to AI tools within the context of special education. No teachers were directly consulted in this process; the entire dataset was derived from AI-generated outputs. In line with this aim, and consistent with the overarching research questions, the researchers first posed the following meta-question to each AI platform included in the study: *"On which topics and in relation to which needs do teachers most frequently ask questions to AI tools?"* Based on the responses generated by the platforms, sample questions were compiled across thematic domains such as instruction, assessment and diagnosis, behavior management, inclusion practices, measurement and evaluation, collaboration with families, and technology use in special education. Drawing on these outputs, an initial pool of 74 questions was constructed (see Figure 2). Subsequently, the question pool underwent a systematic screening process guided by the fundamental principles of the PRISMA framework (Moher et al., 2009). Questions with overlapping meanings, similar content, or reflecting the same underlying professional need were reviewed and consolidated. In this phase, 20 semantically overlapping questions were merged, reducing the pool to 54 questions. An additional 21 questions were excluded on the grounds that they were repetitive, superficial, or not directly aligned with the purpose of the study. The remaining 33 questions were then evaluated according to predefined inclusion criteria. Of these, 13 were excluded following further assessment, as they did not sufficiently reflect professional decision-making processes, experiences of uncertainty, or explicit support needs within special education contexts. As a result of this multi-stage screening process, a final set of 20 questions was identified. These questions were determined to most effectively represent teachers' professional decision-making challenges, experiences of uncertainty, and need for support in the field of special education. Each of the 20 selected questions was subsequently directed separately to each AI platform included in the study. The responses generated by the platforms were recorded as textual data and constituted the primary dataset for analysis.

Figure 2
The Process of Determining the Questions to Be Posed to Artificial Intelligence Tools



Source: Adapted from Moher, D., Liberati, A., Tetzlaff, J., & Altman, D. G. (2009). Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses: the PRISMA statement. *Annals of internal medicine*, 151(4), 264-269. <https://doi.org/10.7326/0003-4819-151-4-200908180-00135>

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Question Selection

Explicit and predetermined criteria were used in constructing the final question set from the initial pool. For a question to be included in the dataset, it was required to meet all of the following criteria:

- It had to be directly related to special education.
- It had to be associated with at least one of the following domains: instruction, assessment and diagnosis, behavior management, inclusive practices, measurement and evaluation, collaboration with families, or technology use.
- It had to reflect the teacher's decision-making process, professional uncertainty, or a concrete professional need.
- It had to have been posed between January and June 2025.
- It had to be structured as a single, clear, and meaningful question.

Conversely, questions displaying any of the following characteristics were excluded from the dataset:

- Superficial questions limited to definitional inquiries (e.g., *What is dyslexia?*),
- Technical or translation-oriented requests (e.g., *Translate this text into Turkish*),

- Direct requests to generate academic assignments (e.g., *Write a paragraph on this topic*),
- Questions only indirectly related to special education and situated within a general education context,
- Repetitive questions in which only wording was altered; in such cases, only one representative version was retained.

Final Question Set Included in the Analysis

The following questions, directed to AI tools and included in the analysis within the scope of this study, constituted the final dataset:

1. A student with autism keeps shouting in class. Should I ignore it, or should I intervene?
2. I prepared an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for an inclusion student, but I am not sure whether I did it correctly.
3. Parents constantly expect one-on-one attention from me. Is it wrong to set boundaries?
4. The Guidance and Research Center (RAM) report does not align with the student's classroom performance. Which should I base my decisions on?
5. How can I manage a student with behavioral problems without using punishment?
6. The school administration tells me to "just manage it," but the class is genuinely struggling. What should I do?
7. Is it fair to grade a student with dyslexia differently?
8. I am not a special education teacher, but I have a student with special needs in my class. Am I inadequate?
9. I am always the one speaking during IEP meetings. Is this normal?
10. There is peer bullying, but I cannot prove it. If I intervene, could I be making a mistake?
11. Do behavior charts really work, or are they just symbolic paperwork?
12. The parent's expectations are very high, but the child's capacity is limited. How should I communicate this?
13. Everyone in the classroom expects solutions from me, but I do not know what to do either.
14. Am I neglecting the rest of the class while focusing on the student with special needs?
15. I constantly feel like I am doing something wrong. Is this normal?
16. Is it possible to provide support without labeling the student?
17. If the interventions do not work, is the problem me?
18. Should I prioritize academic skills or social skills?
19. I disagree with the school counselor. Whose judgment should guide my decision?
20. I feel burned out, but I do not want to quit. Is everyone in this field like this?

Data Analysis

The data obtained in this study were analyzed using an inductive analytical approach. Inductive analysis aims to identify meaningful patterns emerging directly from the data and to structure these patterns into coherent themes (Creswell & Poth, 2016). In this process, the dataset was examined in detail, and open coding was conducted based on units of meaning without relying on a predetermined codebook. During the initial coding phase, 354 distinct codes were generated in order to capture the full range of meaning embedded in the data. At this stage, some codes were found to be repetitive in content, analytically redundant, or only weakly connected to the research questions. Such codes were eliminated to enhance analytical saturation and to prevent code inflation, which may obscure conceptual clarity in qualitative analysis (Saldaña, 2016).

In the second stage, codes that overlapped semantically or expressed the same underlying need in different forms were merged. The purpose of this consolidation process was to transform micro-level distinctions into higher-level conceptual structures that more accurately represented broader professional phenomena. Pattern coding was employed at this stage to identify relationships among codes and to cluster them into more meaningful analytic units (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Semantic proximity and recurring structural patterns were carefully considered to ensure analytical parsimony and theoretical coherence.

As a result of the elimination and merging processes, the number of codes was first reduced from 354 to 277, and subsequently to 61 codes in order to achieve a higher level of abstraction. These refined codes were grouped into categories based on shared characteristics, and themes were generated by examining conceptual relationships among categories. Throughout the entire coding and analysis process, MAXQDA 24 software was utilized to facilitate systematic data organization and traceability. Additionally, responses generated by different AI platforms were analyzed comparatively. By examining similarities and divergences across platforms, consistency of findings was assessed across data sources, thereby strengthening the reliability of the analytical process.

Validity and Reliability (Trustworthiness)

In this study, procedures aimed at ensuring validity and reliability were implemented rigorously and systematically. In qualitative research, the reliability of document analysis largely depends on the accuracy and consistency of the coding process (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Accordingly, the researchers collaboratively reviewed the generated codes, categories, and themes to establish preliminary consensus prior to external validation. Subsequently, the developed codebook and the entire dataset were submitted to two independent experts with prior experience in qualitative analysis within the field of special education. The experts were asked to code the data independently and to reconstruct the thematic structure. Following this process, the researchers' and experts' coding results were compared, and inter-coder agreement was calculated.

The agreement rate was determined using the formula proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994): $\text{Agreement}/(\text{Agreement}+\text{Disagreement})\times 100$. In the literature, values of 80% and above are considered indicative of high inter-coder reliability (Miles &

Huberman, 1994). In the present study, the calculated agreement rate exceeded 90%, indicating a high level of consistency across coders. Qualitative research provides a reliable approach to data generation by enabling in-depth exploration of complex phenomena (Patton, 2014). However, reliability is not ensured solely through data collection and analysis; the transparency, traceability, and theoretical grounding of the research process are equally critical. In this regard, direct quotations from AI-generated responses were included in the findings section to enhance credibility and allow readers to evaluate the alignment between raw data and interpretations (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016).

From a reliability perspective, consistency refers to the extent to which different observers classify the same phenomenon in similar ways or the same researcher interprets it similarly at different points in time (Altunışık et al., 2007). Through careful adherence to systematic coding procedures, expert validation, comparative platform analysis, and transparent reporting, the scientific validity and originality of the study were preserved. A particular concern in studies utilizing AI-generated data is the potential variability of responses across sessions or platforms. To address this, each of the 20 questions was posed to all six AI platforms under identical conditions, and the responses were analyzed comparatively. Convergence across platforms was treated as an indicator of thematic robustness, while divergences were noted and interpreted as meaningful variation rather than noise. This cross-platform design served as a structural safeguard against over-reliance on any single AI system's output, thereby enhancing the overall consistency and credibility of the findings (cf. Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Rationale for the Methodological Approach

The methodological approach adopted in this study differs from prior research in that it examines the use of AI tools in special education through questions generated by teachers during authentic moments of professional need, rather than through pre-structured scenarios or experimentally designed prompts. The dataset consists of questions emerging from real-time uncertainties related to assessment, instructional adaptation, behavior management, and inclusive practices encountered during active teaching processes. This characteristic enhances the ecological validity of the findings. Ecological validity refers to the extent to which research findings can be generalized to real-life settings (Andrade, 2018). By grounding the analysis in naturally occurring professional inquiries, the present study situates AI use within the everyday realities of teachers' work, rather than framing it as an abstract technological phenomenon. In doing so, AI is conceptualized not merely as a digital innovation but as a contextualized professional support mechanism embedded within teachers' lived experiences.

Furthermore, the comparative analysis of responses generated by multiple AI platforms to the same set of questions allows for the identification of both convergences and divergences in how AI tools address teachers' professional needs. This cross-platform comparison contributes not only to content diversity but also to a deeper understanding of the structural and discursive patterns through which AI systems construct guidance, reassurance, and pedagogical direction. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were defined explicitly, systematically, and on theoretical grounds, ensuring that the dataset was not incidental but purposefully constructed and analytically representative. Through this structured selection process, the study avoids randomness

and strengthens the conceptual integrity of the dataset. In this respect, the study offers an original contribution to the literature by examining the interaction between artificial intelligence and special education from a teacher-centered, context-sensitive, and naturalistic data-based perspective.

Ethics Statements

This study involves the analysis of written digital content systematically generated through interactions with AI-based conversational tools within the field of special education. No personally identifiable information was collected or recorded. All data were anonymized and used solely for scientific purposes. The study does not involve human subjects in a manner requiring formal ethical review; therefore, ethics committee approval was not required. The research was conducted in accordance with principles of research ethics, confidentiality, and data protection.

Findings

This section presents the findings and interpretations related to the codes, categories, and themes created based on the research questions. Themes were identified using artificial intelligence tools, and codes and categories were utilized. The categories, codes, and frequencies created for each theme are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

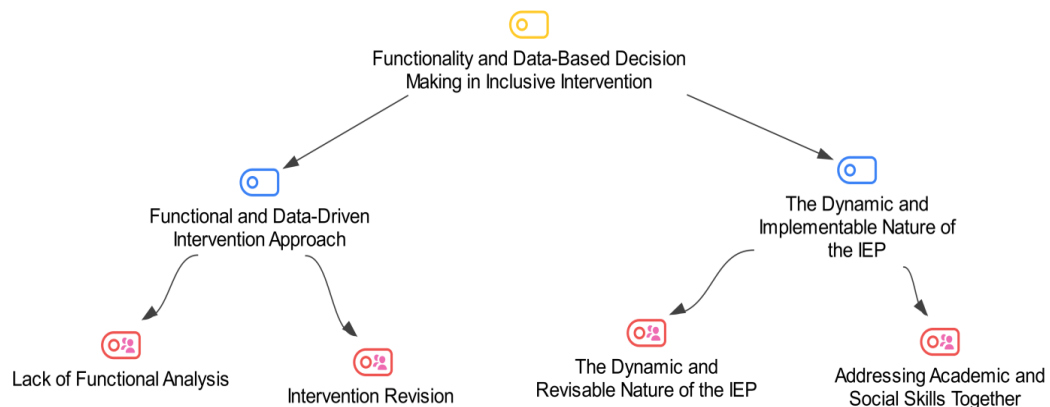
Theme, Category, Code, and Frequency Distributions of the Study

Theme	Category	Code (Frequency)
Functionality and Data-Based Decision Making in Inclusive Intervention	Functional and Data-Driven Intervention Approach	Lack of Functional Analysis (18)
		Intervention Revision (14)
		Sustaining the Intervention (11)
		Distinction Between Static Assessment and Dynamic Observation (6)
		Holistic Assessment Approach (5)
		Functionality and Independence Focus of the IEP (2)
		Impact of Contextual Factors on Performance (1)
	The Dynamic and Implementable Nature of the IEP	Interpreting Inconsistency as Educational Data (1)
		The Dynamic and Revisable Nature of the IEP (8)
		Addressing Academic and Social Skills Together (7)
		Prioritizing Social and Independent Living Skills (4)
		Insufficient Implementation Duration (4)
		Classroom Applicability of the IEP (2)
		Mismatch Between Goals and Developmental Level (1)
		Context-Dependent Variability of Practices (1)
		IEP-Based Accommodations (1)
Teachers' Emotional Burden, Burnout, and	Self-Care and Psychological Resilience	Need for Work-Life Balance (8)
		Focusing on Small Gains (7)
		Ethical Legitimacy of Self-Care (5)

Professional Vulnerability	Emotional Labor and the Experience of Burnout	Sense of Professional Meaning and Purpose (5)
		Negative Impact of Perfectionism (3)
		Developing Self-Compassion (3)
		Burnout as Common but Preventable (8)
		Teacher-Induced Guilt Perception (6)
		High Professional Uncertainty (6)
		Intensive Emotional Labor (5)
		Widespread Sense of Self-Inefficacy (4)
		Symptoms of Burnout (4)
A Needs-Based and Ethically Grounded Understanding of Inclusion (Beyond Labels)	Ethical and Equity-Based Justification of Accommodations	Student-Centered Approach (7)
		Needs-Based Prioritization (6)
		Invisible and Indirect Nature of Bullying (5)
		Equity-Based Justification of Accommodations (3)
		Ethical Awareness and Potential-Oriented Perspective (2)
		Contribution of Inclusion to the Whole Class (1)
		Support-Based Structure of Inclusion (1)
		Ethical Legitimacy of Assessment Accommodations (1)
		Emphasizing the Distinction Between Privilege and Accommodation (1)
Team-Based and Stakeholder-Oriented Approach in IEP Processes	De-Labeling and Needs-Based Language	Use of De-Labeling Language (10)
		Instrumental Role of Diagnosis (6)
		Distinction Between Label and Need (5)
		Professional Legitimacy of Seeking Support (10)
		Shared Responsibility (5)
		Teacher's Coordinator Role (4)
		Active Parental Involvement in the IEP Process (2)
		Empowering Function of Stakeholder Participation (2)
		Violation of the Principle of Collaboration (1)
Systemic Distribution of Responsibility and the Need for Institutional Support	The Protective Role of Stakeholder Participation for Teachers and Processes	Collaborative Goal Setting (1)
		Team-Based and Multi-Stakeholder Structure of the IEP (14)
		Open Communication Within the IEP Team (6)
		Unhealthy Nature of a Single-Voice IEP (1)
		Systemic Framing of Problems (6)
		Necessity of Data-Based Documentation (3)
		Ineffectiveness of the "Coping/Getting By" Approach (2)
		Empowerment of Teachers Through Support Mechanisms (2)
Preventive and Instructional	Systemic Rather Than Individual Responsibility	Professional Solidarity and Demand for Support (3)
		Management-Induced Professional Stress (2)
		Institutional Isolation and the Need for Professional Support
		Priority of Preventive Approaches in Behavior Management (6)
		Positive and Predictable Classroom Management (2)
		Prevention-Based Behavior Management

Figure 4

The Theme of Functionality and Data-Based Decision Making in Inclusive Intervention



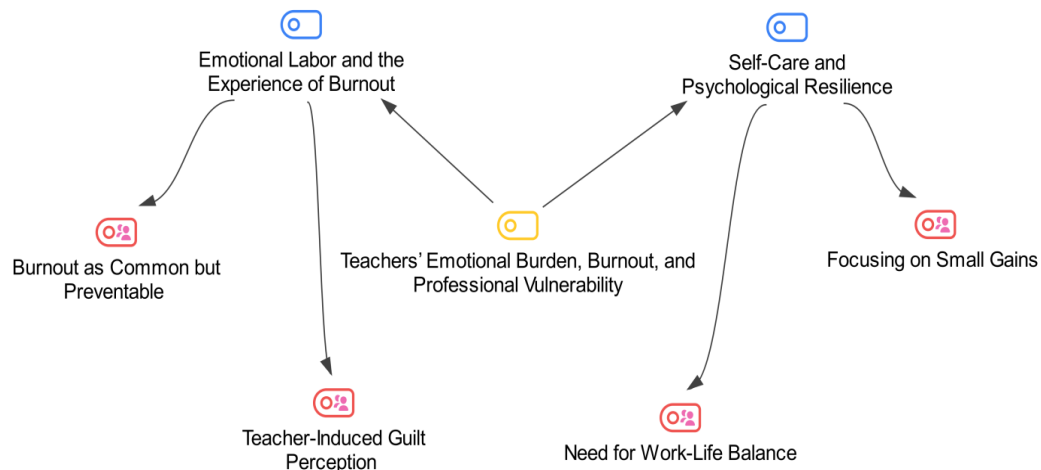
Theme 1 indicates that AI tools strongly emphasize decision-making grounded in functional classroom data rather than relying solely on static diagnostic labels in inclusive interventions. Across the responses, the most frequently recurring emphasis concerned the ineffectiveness of interventions when they are not based on functional analysis (Lack of Functional Analysis, $f=18$). AI-generated responses repeatedly suggested that without identifying the antecedents, functions, and contextual triggers of behaviors, interventions risk remaining superficial or misaligned with student needs. This emphasis naturally led to a secondary but closely related pattern: the need for continuous review and restructuring of interventions (Intervention Revision, $f=14$). AI tools consistently framed intervention planning as an iterative process rather than a fixed solution. The notion that strategies should be monitored, evaluated, and modified in light of classroom observations emerged as a central discursive pattern. Similarly, AI tools underscored that the IEP should not be treated as a static or bureaucratic document, but rather as a dynamic, adaptable structure informed by ongoing classroom data (The Dynamic and Revisable Nature of the IEP, $f=8$). In this framing, the IEP was positioned as a living framework that evolves in response to student performance and contextual realities. A representative quotation reflecting this approach is as follows: *“An IEP is not a document; it is a living process. Your first version does not have to be perfect, but if you review and revise it every 2-3 months, you are on the right track. Do not hesitate to seek feedback from colleagues and the school counselor. Since you are developing it together with parents and relevant specialists in the IEP committee, you are already progressing on a solid foundation.”* (Claude). This excerpt illustrates how data-driven decision-making is constructed as a time-sensitive and context-responsive process. Rather than presenting rigid prescriptions, AI tools promote flexibility, reflection, and collaborative revision. Overall, Theme 1 indicates that AI-generated responses consistently emphasized dynamic, evidence-informed, and iterative approaches to inclusive intervention, with particular focus on functional analysis, ongoing revision, and context-sensitive IEP development.

Theme 2. Teacher's Emotional Burden, Burnout, and Professional Vulnerability

The theme, category, and main codes obtained as a result of the responses of the artificial intelligence tools created in line with the purpose of the research are presented in Figure 5. Frequency information of all codes used in the theme is given in Table 1.

Figure 5

The Theme of Teacher Emotional Burden, Burnout, and Professional Vulnerability



Theme 2 reveals that inclusive education is constructed not only as a pedagogical endeavor but also as a form of professional practice that requires substantial emotional labor. AI tools consistently frame burnout not as an individual deficiency but as a structural and, importantly, preventable process (Burnout as Common but Preventable, $f=8$). Rather than attributing exhaustion to personal inadequacy, the responses situate it within broader systemic pressures and contextual demands. A recurring emphasis concerns the high levels of professional uncertainty under which teachers operate and the ways in which such uncertainty fuels feelings of guilt and perceived self-inadequacy (High Professional Uncertainty, $f=6$; Teacher-Induced Guilt Perception, $f=6$). AI-generated responses frequently normalize these emotional experiences, presenting them as common reactions to complex instructional environments rather than as indicators of incompetence. Within this framing, self-care and work-life balance are not portrayed as optional personal preferences but as ethical imperatives linked to professional sustainability (Need for Work-Life Balance, $f=8$; Ethical Legitimacy of Self-Care, $f=5$). AI tools construct teacher well-being as a prerequisite for maintaining the continuity and quality of inclusive practices. A representative quotation illustrating this perspective states: *“Taking care of yourself is not selfishness; it is sustainability. A burned-out teacher cannot benefit anyone. And yes, many people experience these feelings-you are not alone.”* (DeepSeek). This excerpt highlights how emotional resilience is discursively positioned as integral to inclusive education. By validating teachers’ emotional experiences and normalizing vulnerability, AI tools appear to function not only as informational resources but also as mechanisms of emotional reassurance. Overall, Theme 2 indicates that AI-generated responses consistently framed burnout as a structural and preventable phenomenon,

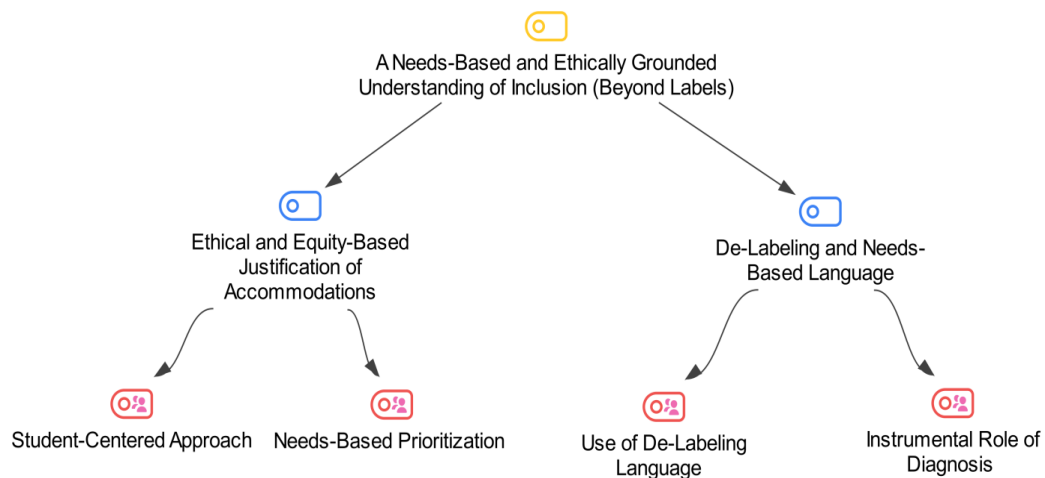
normalized teachers' emotional experiences, and positioned self-care as integral to professional sustainability.

Theme 3. A Needs-Based and Ethically Grounded Understanding of Inclusion (Beyond Labels)

The theme, category, and main codes obtained as a result of the responses of the artificial intelligence tools created in line with the purpose of the research are presented in Figure 6. Frequency information of all codes used in the theme is given in Table 1.

Figure 6

The Theme of a Needs-Based and Ethically Grounded Understanding Of Inclusion (Beyond Labels)



Theme 3 demonstrates that AI tools approach inclusive education within an ethical framework grounded in equity and needs-based reasoning. Across responses, diagnostic labels are not positioned as the central determinants of educational decision-making; rather, they are framed as instrumental tools that help render students' needs visible (Instrumental Role of Diagnosis, $f=6$). This reframing shifts the focus from categorical identification to functional and contextual understanding. A strong emphasis is placed on prioritizing individual needs as the foundational principle of ethical inclusion (Student-Centered Approach, $f=7$). In this perspective, educational planning is justified not by compliance with formal classifications but by responsiveness to the learner's specific profile of strengths and support requirements. AI tools explicitly articulate that accommodations should not be interpreted as privileges but as ethically grounded adjustments designed to ensure equity of opportunity (Equity-Based Justification of Accommodations, $f=3$). This discourse reframes differentiation as a mechanism of justice rather than favoritism. A representative response reflecting this orientation states: *"Although making accommodations may seem to disrupt fairness, it actually makes equality possible."* (Perplexity). This statement encapsulates a needs-based language of inclusion that moves beyond label-driven reasoning. Rather than centering disability categories, AI responses promote an equity-oriented perspective in which fairness is understood as providing differential support in order to achieve comparable participation and access. Overall, Theme 3 indicates that AI-generated responses consistently prioritized needs-based and equity-oriented reasoning over

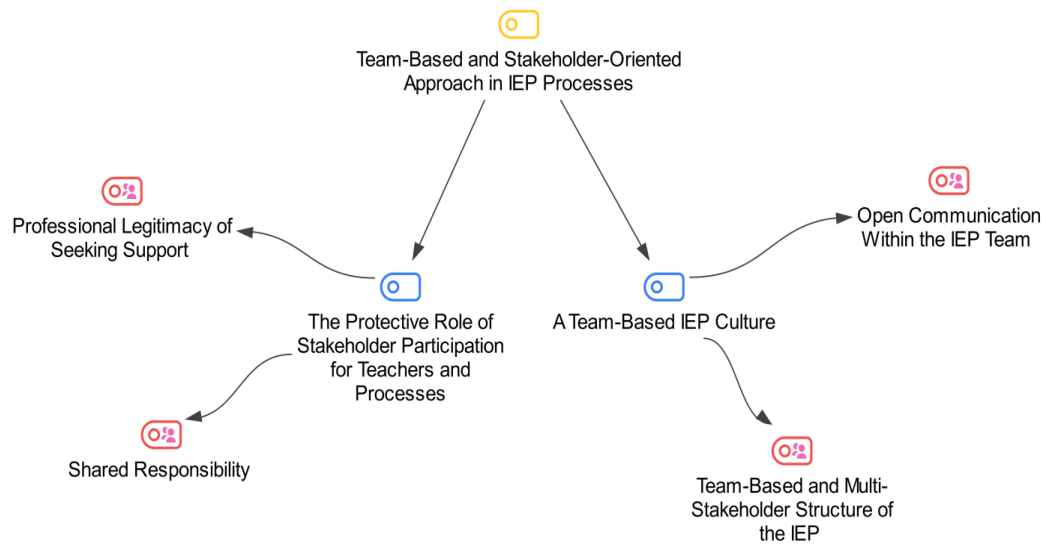
diagnostic categorization, framing accommodations as ethically grounded adjustments rather than privileges.

Theme 4. Team-Based and Stakeholder-Oriented Approach in IEP Processes

The theme, category, and main codes obtained as a result of the responses of the artificial intelligence tools created in line with the purpose of the research are presented in Figure 7. Frequency information of all codes used in the theme is given in Table 1.

Figure 7

Team-Based and Stakeholder-Focused Approach Theme in IEP Processes



Theme 4 indicates that AI tools frame the IEP process not as an individual teacher responsibility but as a collaborative, stakeholder-driven structure. The most dominant emphasis across responses highlights that IEP processes can only be sustainable when implemented through multi-stakeholder collaboration (Team-Based and Multi-Stakeholder Structure of the IEP, $f=14$). This framing situates inclusive planning within a shared professional ecosystem rather than an individualized burden. Responses consistently warn that assuming full responsibility for the IEP process alone may be both pedagogically limiting and emotionally exhausting. Seeking support is explicitly constructed as a marker of professional competence rather than inadequacy (Professional Legitimacy of Seeking Support, $f=10$). In this sense, collaboration is framed not merely as procedural compliance but as an indicator of reflective and mature professional practice. Additionally, stakeholder participation is presented as having a protective and empowering function for teachers (Empowering Function of Stakeholder Participation, $f=2$). The inclusion of administrators, special education specialists, counselors, and families is described as enhancing decision quality while simultaneously redistributing responsibility. A representative quotation summarizing this perspective states: “Unfortunately, this is very common. However, the IEP is a team effort. Carrying the burden of the process alone exhausts the teacher. Actively involving other stakeholders not only improves the quality of decisions but also reduces the teacher’s workload.” (ChatGPT). This excerpt reinforces the notion that collaborative engagement operates both as a quality assurance mechanism and as an emotional

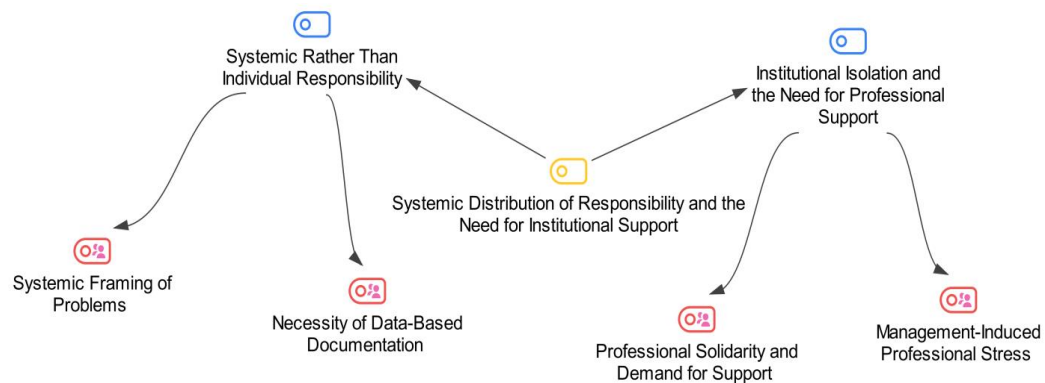
safeguard. Overall, Theme 4 indicates that AI-generated responses consistently framed IEP processes as a multi-stakeholder collaborative structure, positioning shared responsibility and active stakeholder participation as central to sustainable inclusive practice.

Theme 5. Systemic Distribution of Responsibility and the Need for Institutional Support

The theme, category, and main codes reached as a result of the responses of the artificial intelligence tools created in line with the purpose of the research are presented in Figure 8. Frequency information of all codes used in the theme is given in Table 1.

Figure 8

The Theme of Systemic Distribution of Responsibility and the Need for Institutional Support



Theme 5 demonstrates that challenges encountered in inclusive education should be interpreted within a framework of systemic responsibility rather than individual teacher competence. AI tools consistently caution against internalizing structural problems as personal inadequacies, noting that such internalization tends to isolate teachers and intensify professional strain (Systemic Framing of Problems, $f=6$). Instead, responses advocate for defining and addressing difficulties at the institutional level. Within this context, data-driven record-keeping and systematic documentation emerge as strategic tools that strengthen teachers' advocacy capacity (Necessity of Data-Based Documentation, $f=3$). Documentation is not presented merely as bureaucratic compliance but as a mechanism through which teachers can articulate needs, justify interventions, and demand institutional support. Responses also critique the "just manage it" approach, suggesting that it produces temporary and surface-level solutions while exacerbating burnout over time (Ineffectiveness of the "Coping/Getting By" Approach, $f=2$). Rather than resolving underlying structural issues, such approaches shift disproportionate responsibility onto individual teachers. A representative quotation reflecting this perspective states: "When administration says 'just manage it,' they may be expecting the teacher to handle everything alone; however, in special education, classroom management is not solely the teacher's responsibility-it is the school's shared responsibility." (Microsoft Copilot). This statement underscores how institutional support-or the lack thereof-functions as a determining variable in shaping teachers' professional experiences. Overall, Theme 5 indicates that AI-generated responses consistently attributed inclusive education challenges to systemic and

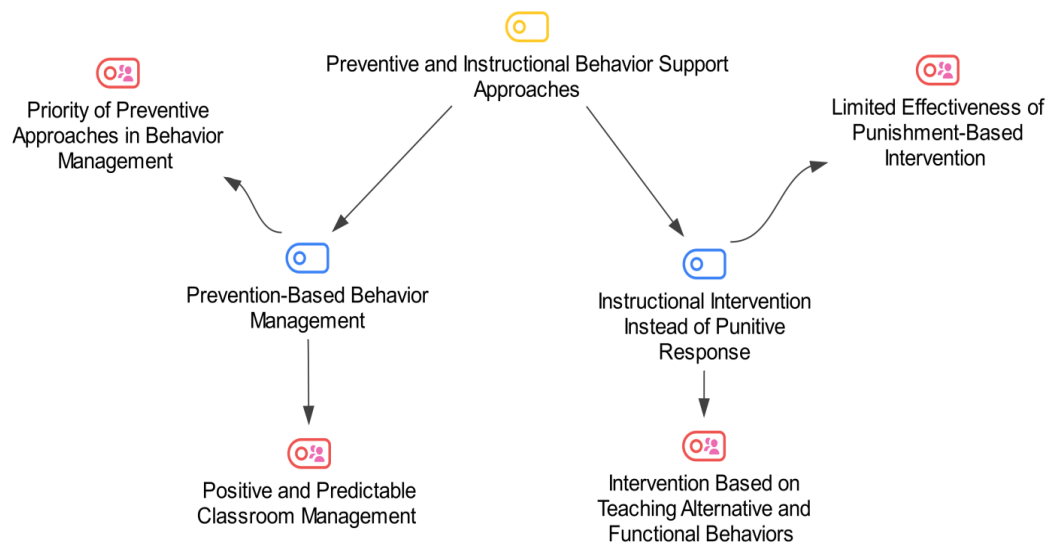
institutional factors rather than individual teacher competence, emphasizing data-based documentation and institutional advocacy as professional strategies.

Theme 6. Preventive and Instructional Behavioral Support Approaches

The theme, category, and main codes obtained as a result of the responses of the artificial intelligence tools created in line with the purpose of the research are presented in Figure 9. Frequency information of all codes used in the theme is given in Table 1.

Figure 9

The Theme of Preventive and Instructional Behavioral Support Approaches



Theme 6 indicates that AI tools prioritize preventive and instructional approaches over punitive reactions in inclusive classroom management. Rather than framing behavior management as a reactive response to crises, AI-generated responses emphasize the importance of proactively structuring environments to prevent difficulties before they escalate (Priority of Preventive Approaches in Behavior Management, $f=6$). This perspective shifts the focus from control to instructional design. Positive and predictable classroom environments are described as serving a protective function for both teachers and students (Positive and Predictable Classroom Management, $f=2$). Predictability, consistency, and clarity of expectations are framed as foundational elements of effective inclusive practice. Moreover, punitive interventions are acknowledged as potentially suppressing behavior but criticized for lacking instructional value. Instead, AI tools advocate for explicitly teaching alternative and functional behaviors (Intervention Based on Teaching Alternative and Functional Behaviors, $f=4$). This reflects a pedagogical understanding of behavior support grounded in skill-building rather than deterrence. A representative quotation summarizing this approach states: “Punishment may stop behavior, but it does not teach; if we want to teach, we must prevent.” (Google Gemini). This excerpt illustrates how AI-generated responses consistently framed behavior management as an instructional and preventive process centered on skill-building rather than reactive discipline.

When the findings are examined holistically, the questions directed to AI tools within the field of special education reflect multilayered professional needs extending beyond information-seeking. Across all six themes, AI-generated responses addressed cognitive, emotional, ethical, and organizational dimensions of inclusive teaching practice. The thematic structure indicates that AI-based digital advisory tools functioned not only as informational resources but also as sources of guidance, normalization, and professional reassurance within the analyzed dataset.

Discussion

This study demonstrates that the questions directed to AI-based digital advisory tools within the context of special education are not merely products of technical information-seeking behavior. Rather, they function as natural indicators of teachers' multilayered needs, reflecting professional uncertainty, ethical dilemmas, emotional burden, the need for social support, and the necessity of structuring behavior management strategies. The questions posed to AI tools frequently contain implicit meanings beyond "What should I do?"—often echoing concerns such as "Am I alone in doing this?", "Is this the right thing to do?", and "Is this burden solely my responsibility?" In this respect, the findings strongly align with UGT, which posits that individuals engage with media technologies not only for information acquisition but also to satisfy specific psychosocial and professional needs (Katz et al., 1974; Rubin, 2009).

The findings further indicate that AI tools promote a function- and context-centered approach in inclusive education rather than a diagnosis-centered one. The emphasis that interventions become ineffective when not grounded in functional analysis aligns with the long-established principle of data-based decision making in special education (Espin et al., 2021; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Lai & Schildkamp, 2013). Defining the IEP not as a static document but as a continuously reviewed and evolving process highlights a critical dimension of sustainability in inclusive practices. This suggests that teachers seek to preserve pedagogical autonomy while simultaneously grounding their decisions in objective data. The structured feedback offered by AI tools appears to support and systematize teachers' intuitive judgments, functioning as a scaffold for reflective decision-making. Moreover, interpreting fluctuations in student performance not as failure but as meaningful indicators to be read alongside contextual variables reflects the foundational principles of dynamic assessment (Lidz & Peña, 2009). By drawing attention to such nuances, AI tools appear to encourage a monitoring-oriented evaluation culture rather than one that overinterprets isolated performance moments. This finding is particularly significant in rendering visible the context-sensitive nature of performance among students with special needs.

The literature consistently highlights that teachers working with students with special needs experience high levels of burnout associated with workload, role ambiguity, and emotional labor (Brunsting et al., 2014; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). More recent evidence further confirms that special education teachers' emotional labor strategies are significantly associated with burnout, with limited institutional support serving as a key risk factor (Wang et al., 2025). Intervention-based approaches targeting burnout through self-care, mindfulness, and coping strategies have shown promising results in reducing emotional exhaustion among special education teachers (Ruble et al.,

2025). Teachers in inclusive classrooms often report tension between academic instruction and behavior management, with problem behaviors increasing emotional exhaustion; this relationship is influenced by variables such as teacher self-efficacy, perceived support, and teacher-student relationships (Aloe et al., 2014; Hopman et al., 2018). The frequent emergence of guilt, inadequacy, and fear of making mistakes in the questions directed to AI tools in this study underscores how visible these stressors are in daily professional practice. The findings suggest that teachers seek support not only for pedagogical decision-making but also for emotional resilience and professional meaning-making. In this regard, AI tools may be interpreted as serving emotional regulation and validation gratifications for teachers.

This interpretation parallels findings from Turkish studies reporting negative associations between psychological well-being and burnout levels among teachers working in special education settings (Söner & Yılmaz, 2020). Teachers appear to seek from AI tools not only solution strategies but also interpretive frameworks that redefine success. The special education literature underscores that micro-achievements are both a natural component of the learning process and a protective factor for teacher motivation (King-Sears, 2008). The visibility of small gains within AI-generated responses may help teachers question perceptions of “insufficient progress” and develop more realistic expectations. This, in turn, supports the sense of professional meaning and purpose, which is a critical factor in reducing burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

Instructional progress among students with special needs is rarely linear; meaningful change often emerges only when sufficient duration and intensity of intervention are provided (Horner et al., 2005). However, the findings suggest that teachers tend to associate short-term lack of observable progress with their own professional competence. The discourse offered by AI tools appears to redirect the focus of perceived failure away from the student or the teacher and toward factors such as intervention duration, goal realism, and contextual alignment. This perspective aligns with the core principles of multi-tiered systems of support, emphasizing systematic monitoring and adequate implementation time rather than premature modification of instructional decisions (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006).

Another key finding indicates that AI tools frame inclusive education within an ethical and needs-based perspective. Positioning diagnosis not as the center of educational decision-making but as one of several tools for rendering student needs visible is consistent with contemporary understandings of inclusive education (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Justifying accommodations not as privileges but as ethical adjustments aimed at ensuring equity reframes the frequently experienced fairness-equality dilemma among teachers. In this sense, AI tools appear to provide an ethical language that teachers can use when explaining accommodation decisions to themselves and to other stakeholders. This suggests that AI functions not only as pedagogical support but also as a normative resource. Research shows that students with special needs are particularly vulnerable to indirect bullying and social exclusion (Rose et al., 2011; Swearer et al., 2012). Such forms of victimization often go unnoticed by teachers and cannot be addressed solely through academic accommodations. By drawing attention to these dimensions, AI tools reinforce the idea that inclusive education extends beyond instructional adjustments to encompass students’ social safety and sense of belonging. This aligns with perspectives emphasizing that inclusion must be

addressed not only through classroom-level practices but also through the broader social climate of the school (Ainscow, 2020).

One of the most striking findings of the study is the reframing of IEP processes as team-based and stakeholder-oriented structures rather than as individual teacher responsibilities. The literature consistently emphasizes that IEP processes, particularly in inclusive educational settings, generate high levels of stress and role conflict for teachers, and that their effective implementation depends on interdisciplinary collaboration (Cook & Friend, 2010; Fish, 2008; Kargın, 2007; Mitchell et al., 2010). In this study, AI-generated responses define the IEP not as an isolated task carried out by a single teacher but as a holistic domain of shared responsibility. This suggests that teachers seek gratifications related to social sharing and distributed responsibility as a counterbalance to feelings of professional isolation. Interpreted through the lens of UGT, this finding indicates that teachers engage with AI not only for cognitive purposes but also as a form of mediated social support. This interpretation is consistent with recent meta-analytic evidence demonstrating that users derive not only utilitarian but also emotional, social, and hedonic gratifications from AI-powered chatbot interactions (Xie et al., 2024).

Another key finding reveals that difficulties encountered in inclusive education are framed not in terms of individual teacher competence but in relation to systemic and institutional arrangements. International research demonstrates that lack of organizational support increases teacher burnout and weakens professional commitment (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). This pattern is also confirmed in the national context. A study conducted in Türkiye found significant relationships between special education teachers' professional commitment and burnout levels, reporting that insufficient organizational support both increases burnout and diminishes professional engagement (Tümekaya, 2024). The findings of the present study reflect teachers' dissatisfaction with managerial approaches perceived as temporary and superficial, thereby underscoring the necessity of system-level interventions.

AI responses in this study tend to move beyond a discourse of "managing" problems and instead emphasize data-based documentation, advocacy, and institutional responsibility. This suggests that teachers seek structural reframing rather than internalized guilt as a form of professional gratification. Similarly, national research examining burnout and life satisfaction among teachers in special education institutions reports that lack of institutional support negatively affects job satisfaction and professional sustainability (Yavuz, 2019). These findings imply that teachers may position AI as a mechanism of professional legitimation and ethical advocacy.

Research further indicates that although IEP processes may be formally conducted, when they are not genuinely team-based, both decision quality declines and teacher burden increases (Friend et al., 2010). Likewise, positive behavior support systems are effective only when implemented systematically and consistently at the school-wide level rather than through isolated individual efforts (Sugai & Horner, 2002). The alignment of AI-generated responses with these principles enables teachers to reinterpret their challenges not as personal deficiencies but as reflections of systemic shortcomings.

Findings related to behavior management point toward a paradigm shift from punitive reactions to preventive and instructional approaches. The literature on Positive

Behavior Support (PBS) and multi-tiered behavior support systems demonstrates positive effects on both student outcomes and teacher well-being (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Sugai & Horner, 2002). The emphasis placed by AI tools on preventive and instructional strategies suggests that teachers seek pedagogical validation not merely for stopping behavior but for understanding and teaching it. This indicates that pedagogical coherence and ethical appropriateness constitute important gratifications in teachers' engagement with AI tools.

When all themes are considered collectively, AI-based digital tools appear to be used by teachers to obtain multiple forms of gratification, including uncertainty reduction, emotional relief, ethical validation, social support, and systemic sense-making. While the literature often frames digital tools primarily as instruments for information acquisition and problem-solving (Hew & Brush, 2007), the present study reveals that teachers derive cognitive, emotional, and professional identity-based gratifications from AI use. This finding takes on added significance given that special education teachers remain in an exploratory phase of AI adoption, suggesting that the psychosocial dimensions of teacher-AI interaction warrant greater attention as usage patterns continue to evolve (Goldman et al., 2024; Naatz & Ruppar, 2026).

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that AI use in special education cannot be reduced to a unidimensional technological interaction. Rather, it represents a multilayered practice intertwined with teachers' professional experiences, emotional burdens, and ethical quests. The perception that AI responses address not only technical questions but also pedagogical, emotional, and ethical needs suggests that the boundaries between information-seeking behavior and professional gratification are becoming increasingly blurred within educational research. These findings generate new avenues for future research, inviting both a reinterpretation of UGT within educational contexts and a deeper examination of the pedagogical and ethical positioning of digital advisory tools in teacher practice.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that although teachers' questions directed to AI-based digital tools in the context of special education may appear on the surface as technical information-seeking behaviors, closer examination reveals that they reflect a multidimensional professional experience and process of meaning-making. The findings indicate that teacher-AI interaction is not merely a cognitive process aimed at identifying "the correct intervention" within the classroom. Rather, it functions as a form of digital advisory practice that contributes to uncertainty reduction, emotional burden sharing, ethical justification of decisions, and the reconstruction of professional identity.

The results further show that teachers do not perceive AI tools as diagnosis-centered systems offering standardized solutions. Instead, they view them as context-sensitive, process-oriented tools that support pedagogical autonomy. The emphasis within AI responses on functional analysis, data-based monitoring, the visibility of micro-achievements, and the importance of sufficient implementation duration aligns with long-standing dynamic and sustainable instructional approaches in the special education literature (Espin et al., 2021; Ruble et al., 2018). This suggests that teachers

are adopting forms of technology use that do not replace pedagogical intuition but rather systematize and strengthen it through structured reasoning.

One of the significant conclusions of the study is that teachers use AI tools not only in individual decision-making processes but also to construct ethical and normative frameworks (Karakuş et al., 2025). The reframing of accommodations within the fairness-equality dilemma (Wieczorek et al., 2025), the decentering of diagnosis in favor of needs-based reasoning, and the emphasis on the social safety dimension of inclusive education suggest that AI responses provide a form of ethical legitimization language for teachers. In this sense, AI is positioned not only as a tool accompanying the question “What should I do?” but also as one accompanying the deeper question, “Is what I am doing right?”

Another important outcome concerns the reframing of challenges in inclusive education from individual inadequacies to systemic and institutional contexts. The team-based nature of IEP processes, the need for school-wide consistency in behavior management, and the impact of organizational support on teacher well-being become visible through AI-generated responses. This indicates that teachers use AI not merely as instructional support but also as a medium for distributing professional responsibility and grounding institutional advocacy.

In conclusion, the study shows that AI use in special education cannot be understood as a unidimensional technological interaction. Rather, it represents a multilayered practice intertwined with teachers’ professional experiences, emotional burdens, and ethical pursuits. The findings suggest that future research examining teacher-AI interaction should move beyond metrics such as accuracy, effectiveness, or performance, and also consider dimensions such as emotional regulation, professional meaning, and ethical gratification.

Implications and Limitations

Based on the findings of this study, several implications can be proposed for practice, research, and policy development. At the practice level, AI-based digital tools should be conceptualized not merely as systems that provide rapid information, but as digital advisory instruments that support structured educational processes. In both pre-service teacher education and in-service training programs, emphasis should be placed not on AI’s capacity to generate ready-made solutions, but on its potential to support effective questioning, contextual analysis, and data-based reasoning. Such an approach may help prevent technological dependency while preserving teachers’ pedagogical autonomy. At the school and institutional levels, AI tools should be integrated into IEP processes, support education planning, and inclusive practices in ways that facilitate team-based discussions. It is essential that these tools be structured to strengthen collaborative communication and shared decision-making rather than increasing individual responsibility burdens. Moreover, AI-generated outputs should not be positioned as autonomous decision-making authorities, but rather as supplementary resources that inform and support professional judgment.

In the research domain, further studies examining teacher-AI interaction through diverse theoretical frameworks are recommended. The explanatory potential of UGT within educational contexts could be explored across different teacher groups, AI tools, and educational levels, thereby contributing significantly to the literature. Additionally,

quantitative and mixed-method studies are needed to systematically investigate the relationships among teachers' attitudes toward AI use, emotional gratifications, and professional well-being.

At the policy and ethical level, frameworks regulating AI use in education should extend beyond concerns of data security and technical competence. Comprehensive models that incorporate pedagogical responsibility, ethical decision-making, and teacher well-being are required. Particularly within inclusive education, AI implementation must be structured in alignment with principles of equity, justice, and ethical responsibility.

This study should be interpreted within certain limitations. First, the data are based on responses generated by AI tools in reply to a systematically developed set of questions reflecting the professional needs of teachers working in special education contexts. As such, they represent AI-constructed discursive frameworks rather than direct accounts of teachers' lived experiences, perceptions, or classroom practices. Future research should complement these findings with observational and practice-based studies that directly engage teacher perspectives. Second, the dataset was limited to specific AI tools. Given that different digital advisory systems may produce distinct response structures and discursive patterns, the findings should not be generalized to all AI-based tools. Comparative studies examining different platforms are recommended.

Furthermore, the study captures teacher-AI interaction at a single point in time. Longitudinal research could provide deeper insight into how teachers' perceptions and gratifications related to AI use evolve over time. Finally, individual teacher characteristics (such as years of professional experience, subject area, or school type) were not examined in detail. The potential influence of these variables on teacher-AI interaction represents an important avenue for future research.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all contributors who supported the development of this study. No additional acknowledgments are declared.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest

Statement of Responsibility

BI: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Writing – Original Draft, Visualization. **HG:** Validation, Writing – Review & Editing, Supervision. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Author Bios:

Bahadır İnan completed his undergraduate studies in the Special Education Teaching Program at the Faculty of Education, Ondokuz Mayıs University, and worked for a short period as a special education teacher under the Ministry of National Education. He received his master's degree (2019) and doctoral degree (2024) from the Department of Special Education at the Institute of Educational Sciences, Ankara University. Since 2025, he has been continuing his academic work at the Department of

Special Education, Faculty of Education, Yozgat Bozok University. His research interests include inclusive education practices, learning disabilities, and autism spectrum disorder.

Hilal Gengeç completed her undergraduate studies in the Classroom Teaching Program at the Faculty of Education, Kafkas University, and worked as a classroom teacher under the Ministry of National Education for eight years. She received her doctoral degree in 2021 from the Department of Special Education at the Institute of Educational Sciences, Ankara University. Since 2025, she has been continuing her academic work at the Department of Special Education, Faculty of Education, Gaziantep University. Her research interests include learning disabilities, reading difficulties, autism spectrum disorder, and educational and behavioral assessment.

References

- Ainscow, M. (2020). Promoting inclusion and equity in education: lessons from international experiences. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, 6(1), 7-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2020.1729587>
- Aloe, A. M., Amo, L. C., & Shanahan, M. E. (2014). Classroom management self-efficacy and burnout: A multivariate meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 26(1), 101-126. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-013-9244-0>
- Altunışık, R., Coşkun, R., Bayraktaroğlu, S., & Yıldırım, E. (2007). *Sosyal bilimlerde araştırma yöntemleri: SPSS uygulamalı* (5th ed.). Sakarya yayıncılık.
- Andrade, C. (2018). Internal, external, and ecological validity in research design, conduct, and evaluation. *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 40(5), 498-499. https://doi.org/10.4103/IJPSYM.IJPSYM_334_18
- Beijaard, D., Meijer, P. C., & Verloop, N. (2004). Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20(2), 107-128. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2003.07.001>
- Billingsley, B., & Bettini, E. (2019). Special education teacher attrition and retention: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 89(5), 697-744. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654319862495>
- Bradshaw, C. P., Mitchell, M. M., & Leaf, P. J. (2010). Examining the effects of schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports on student outcomes: Results from a randomized controlled effectiveness trial in elementary schools. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 12(3), 133-148. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300709334798>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Brunsting, N. C., Sreckovic, M. A., & Lane, K. L. (2014). Special education teacher burnout: A synthesis of research from 1979 to 2013. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 37(4), 681-711. <https://doi.org/10.1353/etc.2014.0032>
- Cobb, S. (1976). Social support as a moderator of life stress. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 38(5), 300-314.
- Cook, L., & Friend, M. (2010). The state of the art of collaboration on behalf of students with disabilities. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 20(1), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10474410903535398>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage publications.
- Espin, C. A., Förster, N., & Mol, S. E. (2021). International perspectives on understanding and improving teachers' data-based instruction and decision making: Introduction to the special series. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 54(4), 239-242. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00222194211017531>

- Fish, W. W. (2008). The IEP meeting: Perceptions of parents of students who receive special education services. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 53(1), 8-14. <https://doi.org/10.3200/PSFL.53.1.8-14>
- Florian, L., & Black-Hawkins, K. (2011). Exploring inclusive pedagogy. *British Educational Research Journal*, 37(5), 813-828. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411926.2010.501096>
- Friend, M., & Bursuck, W. D. (2019). *Including students with special needs: A practical guide for classroom teachers* (8th ed.). Pearson.
- Friend, M., Cook, L., Hurley-Chamberlain, D., & Shamberger, C. (2010). Co-teaching: An illustration of the complexity of collaboration in special education. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 20(1), 9-27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10474410903535380>
- Fuchs, D., & Fuchs, L. S. (2006). Introduction to response to intervention: What, why, and how valid is it?. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 41(1), 93-99. <https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.41.1.4>
- Gallup. (2025, June 25). *Three in 10 teachers use AI weekly, saving six weeks a year (Walton Family Foundation–Gallup Teaching for Tomorrow Study, March 18-April 11, 2025)*. Gallup. Retrieved from https://news.gallup.com/poll/691967/three-teachers-weekly-saving-six-weeks-year.aspx?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Goldman, S. R., Taylor, J., Carreon, A., & Smith, S. J. (2024). Using AI to support special education teacher workload. *Journal of Special Education Technology*, 39(3), 434-447. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01626434241257240>
- Hew, K. F., & Brush, T. (2007). Integrating technology into K-12 teaching and learning: Current knowledge gaps and recommendations for future research. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 55(3), 223-252. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-006-9022-5>
- Holmes, W. (2020). Artificial intelligence in education. In *Encyclopedia of education and information technologies* (pp. 88-103). Springer International Publishing.
- Holmes, W., & Tuomi, I. (2022). State of the art and practice in AI in education. *European Journal of Education*, 57(4), 542-570. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12533>
- Hopman, J. A., Tick, N. T., van der Ende, J., Wubbels, T., Verhulst, F. C., Maras, A., ... & Van Lier, P. A. (2018). Special education teachers' relationships with students and self-efficacy moderate associations between classroom-level disruptive behaviors and emotional exhaustion. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 75, 21-30. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.06.004>
- Horner, R. H., Carr, E. G., Halle, J., McGee, G., Odom, S., & Wolery, M. (2005). The use of single-subject research to identify evidence-based practice in special education. *Exceptional Children*, 71(2), 165-179. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001440290507100203>
- Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2009). The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence in relation to student and classroom outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(1), 491-525. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308325693>

- Karakuş, N., Gedik, K., & Kazazoğlu, S. (2025). Ethical Decision-Making in Education: A Comparative Study of Teachers and Artificial Intelligence in Ethical Dilemmas. *Behavioral Sciences*, 15(4), 469. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs15040469>
- Kargın, T. (2007). Eğitsel değerlendirme ve bireyselleştirilmiş eğitim programı hazırlama süreci. *Ankara Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Fakültesi Özel Eğitim Dergisi*, 8(01), 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1501/Ozlegt_0000000103
- Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1974). *Utilization of mass communication by the individual*. In J. G. Blumler & E. Katz (Eds.), *The uses of mass communications: Current perspectives on gratifications research* (pp. 19-32). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage
- Kelchtermans, G. (2005). Teachers' emotions in educational reforms: Self-understanding, vulnerable commitment and micropolitical literacy. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21(8), 995-1006. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2005.06.009>
- King-Sears, M. E. (2008). Facts and fallacies: Differentiation and the general education curriculum for students with special educational needs. *Support for Learning*, 23(2), 55-62. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9604.2008.00371.x>
- Lai, M., Schildkamp, K. (2013). *Data-based Decision Making: An Overview*. In: Schildkamp, K., Lai, M., Earl, L. (Eds). *Data-based Decision Making in Education. Studies in Educational Leadership*, (pp. 9-21). Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-4816-3_2
- Li, J., Cheng, X., Zhao, X., Nie, J.-Y., & Wen, J.-R. (2023). HaluEval: A large-scale hallucination evaluation benchmark for large language models. *Proceedings of the 2023 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing*, 6449-6464. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2305.11747>
- Lidz, C. S., & Peña, E. D. (2009). Response to intervention and dynamic assessment: Do we just appear to be speaking the same language? *Seminars in Speech and Language*, 30(2), 121-134. <https://doi.org/10.1055/s-0029-1215719>
- Luckin, R., Cukurova, M., Kent, C., & Du Boulay, B. (2022). Empowering educators to be AI-ready. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence*, 3, 100076. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2022.100076>
- Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2016). Understanding the burnout experience: recent research and its implications for psychiatry. *World Psychiatry*, 15(2), 103-111. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20311>
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mitchell, D., Morton, M., & Hornby, G. (2010). Review of the literature on individual education plans: Report to the New Zealand Ministry of Education. *Wellington: Ministry of Education*.
- Moher, D., Liberati, A., Tetzlaff, J., & Altman, D. G. (2009). Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses: the PRISMA statement. *Annals of internal medicine*, 151(4), 264-269. <https://doi.org/10.7326/0003-4819-151-4-200908180-00135>
- Naatz, A. J., & Ruppert, A. (2026). Special education teachers' use of generative artificial intelligence (AI): An exploratory survey of frequency and factors

- influencing adoption. *Journal of Special Education Technology*, 41(2), 227-239. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01626434251379800>
- Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). Sage publications.
- Rose, C. A., Espelage, D. L., Aragon, S. R., & Elliott, J. (2011). Bullying and victimization among students in special education and general education curricula. *Exceptionality Education International*, 21(3). <https://doi.org/10.5206/eei.v21i3.7679>
- Rubin, A. M. (2009). *Uses and gratifications*. In R. L. Nabi & M. B. Oliver (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of media processes and effects* (pp. 147–159). Sage Publishing.
- Ruble, L. A., McGrew, J. H., Wong, W. H., & Missall, K. N. (2018). Special education teachers' perceptions and intentions toward data collection. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 40(2), 177-191. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1053815118771391>
- Ruble, L., McGrew, J. H., Dueber, D., & Salyers, M. P. (2025). BREATHE-EASE goals for reducing special education teacher burnout. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 48(1), 5-25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08884064241288262>
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Selwyn, N. (2022). The future of AI and education: Some cautionary notes. *European Journal of Education*, 57(4), 620-631. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12532>
- Shulman, L. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57(1), 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.57.1.j463w79r56455411>
- Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2017). Motivated for teaching? Associations with school goal structure, teacher self-efficacy, job satisfaction and emotional exhaustion. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 67, 152-160. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.06.006>
- Skjuve, M., Brandtzæg, P. B., & Følstad, A. (2024). Why do people use ChatGPT? Exploring user motivations for generative conversational AI. *First Monday*, 29(1). <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v29i1.13541>
- Söner, O., & Yılmaz, O. (2020). Özel eğitim sınıflarında görev yapan öğretmenlerin psikolojik iyi oluşları ve tükenmişlik düzeyleri. *Trakya Eğitim Dergisi*, 10(3), 668-682. <https://doi.org/10.24315/tred.599742>
- StatCounter Global Stats (2026). *AI Chatbot Market Share in Turkey May 2026*. Retrieved from <https://gs.statcounter.com/ai-chatbot-market-share/all/turkey/2025>
- Sugai, G., & Horner, R. H. (2002). Introduction to the special series on positive behavior support in schools. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 10(3), 130-135. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10634266020100030101>
- Swearer, S. M., Wang, C., Maag, J. W., Siebecker, A. B., & Frerichs, L. J. (2012). Understanding the bullying dynamic among students in special and general education. *Journal of School Psychology*, 50(4), 503-520. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2012.04.001>
- Trust, T., Whalen, J. & Mouza, C. (2023). Editorial: ChatGPT: Challenges, opportunities, and implications for teacher education. *Contemporary Issues in*

- Technology and Teacher Education*, 23(1), 1-23. <https://www.learntechlib.org/primary/p/222408/>.
- Tümekaya, G. S. (2024). Özel eğitim öğretmenlerinin mesleki bağlılık ve tükenmişlik düzeyleri arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesi. *Çukurova Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 33(2), 482-500. <https://doi.org/10.35379/cusosbil.1297671>
- Turkish Statistical Institute. (2025, 1 Ekim). *Yapay zekâ istatistikleri* (Sayı:57945). Retrived from <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Yapay-Zeka-Istatistikleri-2025-57945>
- Wach, K., Duong, C. D., Ejdy, J., Kazlauskaitė, R., Korzynski, P., Mazurek, G., ... & Ziemba, E. (2023). The dark side of generative artificial intelligence: A critical analysis of controversies and risks of ChatGPT. *Entrepreneurial Business and Economics Review*, 11(2), 7-30. <https://doi.org/10.15678/EBER.2023.110201>
- Wang, Y., Fu, W., & Xu, S. (2025). Special education teachers' emotional labor strategies and its relationship with job burnout in China: The moderating role of psychological capital. *WORK: A Journal of Prevention, Assessment & Rehabilitation*, 81(2), 2582-2592. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10519815241311181>
- Wieczorek, M., Hosseini, M. & Gordijn, B. (2025). Unpacking the ethics of using AI in primary and secondary education: a systematic literature review. *AI Ethics*, 5, 4693-4711. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43681-025-00770-0>
- Xie, C., Wang, Y., & Cheng, Y. (2024). Does artificial intelligence satisfy you? A meta-analysis of user gratification and user satisfaction with AI-powered chatbots. *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 40(3), 613-623. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10447318.2022.2121458>
- Yavuz, M. (2019). Özel eğitim ve rehabilitasyon merkezlerinde çalışan öğretmenlerin mesleki tükenmişlik düzeyleri ve yaşam doyumlarının incelenmesi. *OPUS International Journal of Society Researches*, 13(19), 527-556. <https://doi.org/10.26466/opus.601008>
- Yıldırım, A., & Şimşek, H. (2016). *Sosyal bilimlerde nitel araştırma yöntemleri* (10th ed.). Seçkin Yayıncılık.
- Zawacki-Richter, O., Marín, V. I., Bond, M., & Gouverneur, F. (2019). Systematic review of research on artificial intelligence applications in higher education—where are the educators?. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 16(1), 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-019-0171-0>



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0). For further information, you can refer to <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>