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K.T. Toktarbekova

Doctoral Student Kazakh National Pedagogical University named after Abai,

e-mail: kurash1983@mail.ru

Almaty, Kazakhstan

PSYCHOLOGICAL DETERMINANTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIO-PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCIES IN FUTURE SPECIAL EDUCATORS

Abstract.

This article offers a theoretical and analytical review of the psychological determinants underlying the development of socio-pedagogical competencies in future special educators. In contemporary inclusive education, professional success is shaped not only by subject-matter and methodological knowledge, but also by a broad range of personal–psychological characteristics. The analysis of the literature highlights several core components of competence: emotional intelligence, empathy, professional reflection, self-regulation, internal motivation, and social sensitivity. These components operate as an integrated psychological system that supports the formation of socio-pedagogical competencies rather than as a set of isolated traits. Particular attention is given to the role of a psychologically safe learning environment, supportive interactions with instructors, supervision practices, and structured reflective tasks in strengthening students' intrinsic motivation and sense of professional self-efficacy. The review further shows that the

dynamic interaction between personality factors and pedagogical conditions influences future special educators' stress tolerance, their capacity to interpret complex educational situations, and their ability to build constructive relationships with children, families, and colleagues. The conclusions point to the need to reinforce the psychological dimension of special educator training programmes by incorporating targeted interventions aimed at developing emotional competence and reflective skills. By focusing on psychological determinants, the article contributes to a deeper understanding of the personal and professional profile of future special educators within the framework of psychological research.

Keywords: socio-pedagogical competencies, psychological determinants, emotional intelligence, professional reflection, professional motivation, social sensitivity.

Қ.Т. Тоқтарбекова

Абай атындағы Қазақ ұлттық педагогикалық университеті докторанты

e-mail: kurash1983@mail.ru

Алматы қ., Қазақстан

БОЛАШАҚ АРНАЙЫ ПЕДАГОГТАРДЫҢ ӘЛЕУМЕТТІК-ПЕДАГОГИКАЛЫҚ ҚҰЗЫРЕТТІЛІКТЕРІН ДАМУДЫҢ ПСИХОЛОГИЯЛЫҚ ДЕТЕРМИНАНТТАРЫ

Аннотация.

Бұл мақалада болашақ арнайы педагогтардың әлеуметтік-педагогикалық құзыреттіліктерін дамытудың психологиялық детерминанттары теориялық-аналитикалық тұрғыдан қарастырылады. Қазіргі инклюзивті білім беру жағдайында арнайы педагогтың кәсіби табыстылығы оның тек пәндік және әдістемелік дайындығымен ғана емес, сонымен қатар тұлғалық-психологиялық дайындығымен айқындалады. Зерттеу барысында кәсіби құзыреттіліктің құрылымында эмоционалдық интеллект, эмпатия, рефлексия, өзін-өзі реттеу, кәсіби мотивация және әлеуметтік сезімталдық сияқты маңызды психологиялық компоненттердің рөлі жүйеленді. Әдебиеттерге жасалған шолу бұл компоненттердің бір-бірімен өзара байланыста әрекет ететінін және олардың үйлесімді дамуы болашақ арнайы педагогтардың әлеуметтік-педагогикалық құзыреттіліктерін тереңдетуге мүмкіндік беретінін көрсетті. Сондай-ақ студенттің оқу ортасындағы психологиялық жайлылық, оқытушы тарапынан көрсетілетін қолдау, супервизиялық сүйемелдеу және рефлексивтік тапсырмалар жүйесі ішкі мотивацияны күшейтетін маңызды шарттар ретінде сипатталады. Мақалада тұлғалық-психологиялық факторлар мен педагогикалық жағдайлардың өзара ықпалы негізінде болашақ маманның кәсіби өзіндік тиімділігі, стресске төзімділігі және балалармен, ата-аналармен, әріптестермен конструктивті қарым-қатынас орната алу қабілеті талданады. Теориялық қорытындылар арнайы педагогтарды даярлау бағдарламаларын психологиялық компоненттермен байыту, студенттердің эмоционалдық және рефлексивтік тәжірибесін мақсатты дамытуды күшейту қажеттілігін айқындайды. Ұсынылған тұжырымдар психология сериясындағы зерттеулер контекстінде болашақ арнайы педагогтың тұлғалық-психологиялық бейнесін тереңірек түсіндіруге бағытталған.

Түйін сөздер: әлеуметтік-педагогикалық құзыреттіліктер, психологиялық детерминанттар, эмоционалдық интеллект, кәсіби рефлексия, кәсіби мотивация, әлеуметтік сезімталдық.

К.Т. Токтарбекова

Докторант Казахский национальный педагогический университет имени Абая

e-mail: kurash1983@mail.ru

Алматы, Казахстан

ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ ДЕТЕРМИНАНТЫ РАЗВИТИЯ СОЦИАЛЬНО-ПЕДАГОГИЧЕСКИХ КОМПЕТЕНЦИЙ БУДУЩИХ СПЕЦИАЛЬНЫХ ПЕДАГОГОВ

Аннотация.

В статье представлен теоретико-аналитический обзор психологических детерминант развития социально-педагогических компетенций будущих специальных педагогов. В условиях инклюзивного образования профессиональная успешность педагога определяется не только уровнем его предметно-методической подготовки, но и степенью сформированности личностно-психологических качеств. Проведённый анализ литературы позволяет выделить ключевые психологические компоненты компетентности: эмоциональный интеллект, эмпатию, рефлексивность, саморегуляцию, профессиональную мотивацию и социальную чувствительность. Показано, что данные компоненты функционируют как взаимосвязанная система, а их гармоничное развитие способствует углублению социально-педагогических компетенций будущих специалистов. Особое внимание уделяется влиянию психологически безопасной образовательной среды, поддерживающего стиля взаимодействия преподавателя, супервизии и рефлексивных заданий на формирование внутренней мотивации студентов. На основе анализа подчёркивается, что взаимодействие личностных факторов и педагогических условий определяет уровень профессиональной самооценки, стрессоустойчивости и способность педагога к конструктивному взаимодействию с детьми, их семьями и коллегами. Теоретические выводы указывают на необходимость усиления психологического компонента в программах подготовки специальных педагогов и внедрения технологий, развивающих эмоциональную компетентность и рефлексивность. Материал статьи ориентирован на психологическую проблематику и может служить основой для дальнейших исследований личностного профиля будущего специального педагога.

Ключевые слова: социально-педагогические компетенции, психологические детерминанты, эмоциональный интеллект, профессиональная рефлексивность, мотивация профессиональной деятельности, социальная чувствительность.

Introduction. Over the past decades, discussions about teacher professionalism have increasingly shifted from the notion of “qualified specialist” to the idea of a psychologically mature and socially competent personality. This shift is especially visible in special and inclusive education, where teachers work with children whose developmental trajectories, social needs, and emotional states often differ markedly from those of their peers [1,2]. In such contexts, the socio-pedagogical competencies of future special educators—namely, their ability to support social adaptation, mediate relationships, and navigate complex family and institutional systems—can no longer be separated from the psychological resources that underpin these competencies.

In the broader competence-based discourse, socio-pedagogical competence is understood as an integrative construct that includes knowledge, values, attitudes, and behavioural patterns relevant to social interaction and educational support [3,4]. For special educators, however, this construct is inseparable from a number of key psychological determinants. Emotional intelligence, empathy, self-regulation, reflective capacity, and internal professional motivation are not simply “desirable qualities”; they constitute the inner mechanisms through which socio-pedagogical competencies are activated in real educational situations [5,6,7]. When these determinants are underdeveloped, even well-designed curricula and methodical training may fail to translate into effective practice.

Research in educational psychology has repeatedly shown that teachers’ emotional and social competences are linked to classroom climate, student well-being, and the quality of teacher–student interactions [8,9]. In special education, this link becomes even more pronounced: educators must read subtle emotional cues, respond sensitively to challenging behaviour, and maintain

psychological stability in the face of chronic stressors [10]. At the same time, studies conducted in Kazakhstan and other countries in the region indicate that inclusive education reforms have created new expectations for special educators without always providing a sufficient psychological support framework during their university preparation [11,12,13]. As a result, questions arise about which psychological factors most strongly determine the development of socio-pedagogical competencies and how these factors can be intentionally strengthened in training programmes.

Despite the growing body of work on competence-based education, there remains a relative lack of integrative analyses that bring together psychological determinants and socio-pedagogical competence in the specific context of future special educators. Many studies either focus on general teacher competences or address single psychological constructs—such as emotional intelligence or stress resilience—without situating them within a broader competence model [5,8]. This fragmentation makes it difficult to design coherent educational interventions that target the full spectrum of psychological conditions required for effective socio-pedagogical practice.

The present article seeks to address this gap by providing a theoretical and analytical review of the psychological determinants that underlie the development of socio-pedagogical competencies in future special educators. Drawing on international and Kazakhstani research in educational psychology, special pedagogy, and inclusive education, the paper systematizes current views on emotional intelligence, empathy, professional reflection, self-regulation, motivation, and social sensitivity as core psychological determinants. The article also examines how these determinants interact with features of the learning environment—such as psychological safety, supervision, and reflective tasks—to shape students' professional readiness. In doing so, it aims to offer a conceptual basis for rethinking the psychological component of special educator training programmes and for designing targeted interventions that foster deeper, more stable socio-pedagogical competencies.

Debates on teacher competence have gradually shifted from narrow descriptions of professional skills to broader, more holistic models that include psychological, social, and value-laden dimensions. Within this shift, socio-pedagogical competence has been conceptualised as an integrative construct that brings together knowledge, attitudes, and behavioural strategies relevant to supporting learners' social development and well-being [3,4]. While such competence is important for all teachers, it acquires a specific meaning in the context of special and inclusive education, where professionals are required to respond to complex developmental needs, diverse family situations, and often emotionally loaded interactions [14]. This specificity has led researchers to pay increasing attention to the psychological preconditions that make socio-pedagogical competence viable in real practice, rather than as an abstract requirement in curricular documents.

One of the most widely discussed psychological determinants is emotional intelligence. Goleman (1995) popularised the idea that the ability to recognise, understand, and regulate emotions plays a central role in professional effectiveness. Subsequent empirical work in education has reinforced this claim, showing that teachers with higher emotional intelligence tend to create more supportive classroom climates, manage stress more constructively, and demonstrate greater sensitivity to learners' emotional states [6,8]. In special education, these findings have particular weight: teachers are expected to decode subtle nonverbal cues, respond appropriately to challenging behaviours, and maintain emotional balance in situations that may involve frustration, parental anxiety, or systemic constraints [10]. Thus, emotional intelligence can be seen as a core psychological mechanism through which socio-pedagogical competencies such as empathy, tactful communication, and conflict mediation are enacted.

Closely related to emotional intelligence is the construct of empathy and social sensitivity, which the literature consistently identifies as foundational for inclusive practice. Studies in inclusive pedagogy show that when teachers adopt an empathic stance, pupils are more likely to feel accepted, secure, and motivated to participate in classroom activities. Empathy does not function in isolation: it is intertwined with attitudes toward diversity, beliefs about learners' capabilities, and an

orientation toward collaboration with families. Kazakhstani research echoes these findings, underscoring that social sensitivity is especially critical for teachers working in emerging inclusive systems, where societal attitudes toward disability and difference may still be in transition [11,12]. In this sense, empathy operates as both a psychological disposition and a socio-cultural competence that mediates the teacher's relationships with children, parents, and colleagues.

Another important line of research focuses on professional reflection and self-regulation as psychological conditions for competence. Schön's (1983) [15] notion of the "reflective practitioner" portrays professionals as individuals who continuously analyse their own actions, question tacit assumptions, and adapt their strategies in response to complex situations. Subsequent work has elaborated how reflective skills support teacher learning across the career span, linking reflection to identity development, resilience, and long-term commitment to the profession [9]. For future special educators, reflection is directly related to monitoring a child's developmental progress, adjusting instruction, and recalibrating expectations in collaboration with families and multidisciplinary teams. Self-regulation, in turn, enables teachers to manage their own emotional reactions and cognitive resources while engaging in such reflective processes [7]. When reflection and self-regulation are underdeveloped, teachers may struggle to interpret challenging situations constructively, which undermines the growth of socio-pedagogical competence.

The literature also highlights communicative culture and interpersonal competence as psychologically grounded determinants of socio-pedagogical effectiveness. Within general pedagogy and language education, communicative culture is described as a combination of verbal and nonverbal skills, ethical awareness, and sensitivity to context, including intercultural dimensions [16]. In special education, these abilities are crucial for building trusting relationships with parents, negotiating roles within multidisciplinary teams, and advocating for learners' needs in institutional settings (14). Communication problems at any of these levels can compromise coordination of support, generate misunderstandings, and increase stress for all actors involved. Consequently, communicative culture is not merely a technical skill set, but a psychological resource rooted in self-awareness, perspective taking, and value orientations.

A further body of work concerns the learning environment and its socio-psychological characteristics as contextual determinants of competence development. Research grounded in self-determination theory has shown that environments which support autonomy, competence, and relatedness foster higher intrinsic motivation, better self-regulation, and more adaptive coping strategies among students. When applied to teacher education, these insights suggest that psychologically safe, supportive, and dialogic learning environments are more likely to nurture the emotional and social competencies required for inclusive practice. Empirical studies in Kazakhstani universities indicate that such environments—characterised by constructive feedback, opportunities for collaboration, and respect for student voice—contribute to stronger professional motivation and a more stable sense of self-efficacy among future teachers [13,17]. Thus, the development of socio-pedagogical competence cannot be attributed solely to individual traits; it is also shaped by the emotional tone and relational dynamics of the training context.

Finally, a significant strand of literature emphasises practice-oriented learning, supervision, and modelled professional situations as vehicles through which psychological determinants are activated and consolidated. Darling-Hammond (2017) [18] and others argue that authentic, practice-based experiences—such as internships in inclusive schools, case analysis, and role-play—provide fertile ground for integrating emotional, cognitive, and behavioural aspects of competence. Supervision and mentoring further enhance this process by offering structured reflection, emotional support, and professional guidance [14]. In special education, practice settings expose students to real dilemmas and emotional pressures, thereby testing and strengthening their emotional intelligence, empathy, and resilience. Without such practice-rich environments, theoretical knowledge about inclusion and support strategies may remain underutilised and disconnected from the psychological demands of the profession.

Taken together, the literature suggests that the socio-pedagogical competencies of future special educators emerge from the interplay of multiple psychological determinants—emotional intelligence, empathy, reflection, self-regulation, motivation, and social sensitivity—embedded within specific educational environments and practices. However, many existing studies treat these determinants separately or focus on general teacher populations rather than future special educators. There is still a shortage of integrative frameworks that explicitly link these psychological factors to a coherent model of socio-pedagogical competence in special education. Addressing this gap requires theoretical work that synthesises existing findings and clarifies how psychological determinants and training conditions jointly shape the competence profile of future special educators.

Methodology, materials, and research methods. Given that this study was designed as a theoretical–analytic review, the research methodology focused on systematically collecting, filtering, and interpreting existing empirical and conceptual work rather than generating primary quantitative or qualitative data. The overall aim was to identify and synthesise psychological determinants that underpin the development of socio-pedagogical competencies in future special educators, as well as to clarify how these determinants are embedded in training conditions and educational environments.

The study followed a multi-stage procedure combining elements of systematic literature review, content analysis, comparative analysis, interpretative analysis, and conceptual modelling [4,15,18].

Four main stages were distinguished:

1. Identification and selection of relevant literature;
2. Content analysis and coding of key psychological determinants;
3. Comparative and interpretative analysis of theoretical approaches;
4. Construction of an author’s conceptual model of psychological determinants and training conditions.

At the first stage, a broad literature search was conducted on the preparation of special educators, socio-pedagogical competence, emotional intelligence, empathy, reflection, self-regulation, motivation, and related constructs [5,10]. Searches were carried out in Web of Science, Scopus, ERIC, SpringerLink, Elsevier and in national databases containing Kazakhstani publications [11,12,13,17]. Priority was given to publications:

- published between 2014–2024;
- focused on teacher or special educator training;
- addressing at least one psychological construct relevant to socio-pedagogical competence;
- published in peer-reviewed journals, monographs or recognised conference proceedings.

Table 1. Databases and Inclusion Criteria Used in the Review

Database / Source	Typical Keywords Used	Main Inclusion Criteria
Web of Science, Scopus	<i>special educator, socio-pedagogical competence, emotional intelligence, reflection</i>	2014–2024, peer-reviewed, focus on teacher competence
ERIC	<i>inclusive education, teacher education, social–emotional competence</i>	Empirical or review, links to psychological determinants
Springer, Elsevier	<i>special education, professional identity, self-regulation</i>	Conceptual and empirical studies in education/psychology
National journals (Kazakhstan)	<i>инклюзивті білім, арнайы педагог, кәсіби құзыреттілік</i>	Articles on local inclusive reforms and teacher training

This stage resulted in a corpus of international and national studies that provided a sufficiently rich basis for further analysis [1,2,14].

In the second stage, qualitative content analysis was applied to the selected texts. The aim was to identify recurring psychological constructs that are directly or indirectly linked to socio-pedagogical competence. Following an iterative reading, key terms and conceptual clusters were coded. The coding process led to a set of core psychological determinants frequently discussed across studies: emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995; Brackett & Rivers, 2014); empathy and social sensitivity (Ainscow, 2020; Aitbayeva, 2021); professional reflection (Schön, 1983; Day, 2019); self-regulation and emotional stability (Ryan & Deci, 2000); internal professional motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Kulmagambetova, 2020); communicative culture and interpersonal competence (Littlewood, 2014; Friend & Cook, 2017). Table 2 presents the final coding scheme.

Table 2 - Coding Scheme for Psychological Determinants of Socio-Pedagogical Competence

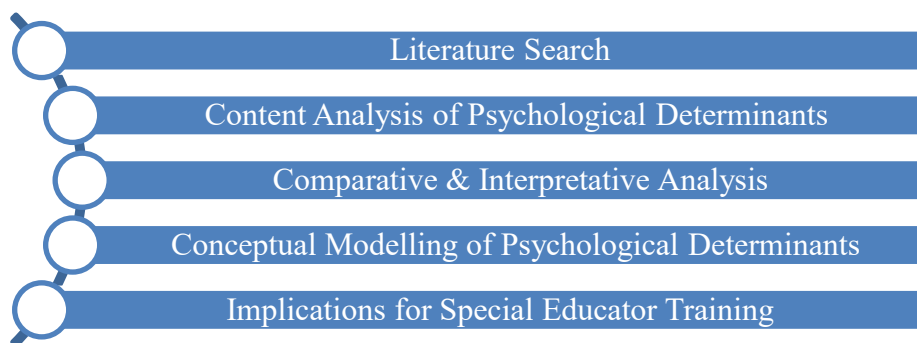
Code	Short Description	Typical Indicators in the Literature
EI – Emotional Intelligence	Perceiving, understanding, and regulating emotions	emotion recognition, coping with stress, emotional balance (Goleman, 1995)
EMP – Empathy / Social Sensitivity	Understanding others’ feelings, perspective-taking	sensitive responses to learners, inclusive attitudes (Ainscow, 2020)
REF – Professional Reflection	Critical analysis of own practice and assumptions	reflective journals, self-evaluation (Schön, 1983; Day, 2019)
SR – Self-Regulation	Managing impulses, attention, and emotional reactions	self-control, persistence, emotional stability (Ryan & Deci, 2000)
MOT – Professional Motivation	Internal commitment to the profession	intrinsic motivation, value orientation (Ryan & Deci, 2000)
COM – Communicative Culture	Verbal/nonverbal interaction, ethical communication	collaboration with parents, teams, learners (Littlewood, 2014; Friend & Cook, 2017)

The analysis showed that these determinants rarely appear in isolation; instead, they form an interdependent psychological system that underpins socio-pedagogical competence rather than simply adding to it as “extra traits”.

At the third stage, comparative analysis was used to contrast different theoretical and regional traditions. European approaches tended to emphasise personal and social development, American literature focused more strongly on practice-oriented and behavioural dimensions, whereas Kazakhstani studies frequently framed competence within the rapid expansion of inclusive education and the need for psychological support to teachers (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Mitchell, 2014; Aitbayeva, 2021; Omarova, 2019).

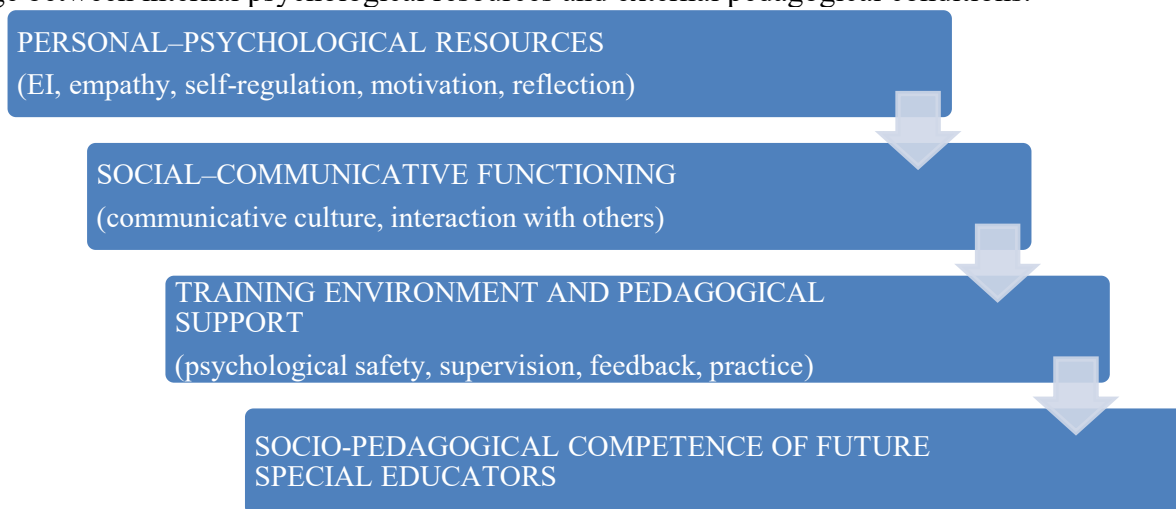
Alongside comparison, interpretative analysis was applied to connect abstract psychological constructs with typical educational situations. For instance, emotional intelligence was interpreted not only as an ability to “manage emotions” but as a mechanism that allows future special educators to respond constructively to challenging behaviour, family anxiety, and institutional constraints (Brackett & Rivers, 2014; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Similarly, reflection was understood as a practical capacity to reconsider expectations, adapt strategies, and maintain a coherent professional identity under pressure (Schön, 1983; Day, 2019). This interpretative lens helped move beyond purely descriptive classifications and to clarify how psychological determinants operate in the lived reality of special educator preparation.

The final stage involved developing an author’s conceptual model that integrates psychological determinants with training conditions in a coherent framework. The model reflects both the internal structure of determinants and their interaction with the learning environment.



Picture 1. Stages of the Theoretical–Analytic Review

Building on this general flow, a second, more detailed model was constructed to show the linkage between internal psychological resources and external pedagogical conditions.



Picture 2. Psychological Determinants and Training Conditions in the Development of Socio-Pedagogical Competence

This model is consistent with empirical and theoretical work indicating that competence development is a multi-level process, shaped by the interplay of personal psychological resources and the socio-psychological climate of the training environment (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Sagyndykova, 2022).

Taken together, the combination of systematic search, content analysis, comparative and interpretative procedures, and conceptual modelling allowed the study to move from a heterogeneous body of literature to a more structured understanding of psychological determinants. This methodology provides a transparent and replicable logic for tracing how constructs such as emotional intelligence, empathy, reflection, and self-regulation are discussed in the literature, and how they can be theoretically integrated into a model of socio-pedagogical competence in future special educators (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Mitchell, 2014).

Such an approach not only clarifies the psychological foundations of competence but also offers a methodological basis for future empirical studies and for the redesign of training programmes that explicitly target these determinants.

Results and Discussion. Because this study is a theoretical–analytic review, the “results” represent patterns that emerged from the systematic reading, coding, and comparison of existing research, rather than numerical findings. The analysis converged on a set of core psychological determinants that consistently appear in the literature as conditions for the development of socio-pedagogical competencies in future special educators. These determinants do not operate independently; instead, they form a dynamic system that is shaped by the socio-psychological characteristics of the training environment.

The content analysis confirmed six psychological determinants as central to the competence profile of future special educators: emotional intelligence, empathy/social sensitivity, professional reflection, self-regulation, internal professional motivation, and communicative culture (Goleman, 1995; Brackett & Rivers, 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Littlewood, 2014). Across different studies, these constructs appear in varying combinations, but they recur with enough regularity to be considered the “psychological core” of socio-pedagogical competence.

Emotional intelligence and empathy surfaced as particularly salient. Research shows that teachers who are better able to recognise and regulate their own emotions, as well as to read the emotional states of learners, are more effective in building supportive classroom climates and handling challenging behaviour (Goleman, 1995; Brackett & Rivers, 2014; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). In special and inclusive education, where emotional demands are intensified, these skills are repeatedly described as prerequisites for meaningful socio-pedagogical support (Mitchell, 2014; Ainscow, 2020).

Professional reflection and self-regulation were found to function as meta-processes: they enable future educators to monitor their own behaviour, interpret complex situations, and adjust their strategies over time (Schön, 1983; Day, 2019). Without reflective and self-regulatory capacities, other determinants (such as emotional intelligence or social sensitivity) remain fragmented and are less likely to translate into coherent professional practice.

Internal professional motivation emerged as a stabilising factor that links psychological determinants to long-term commitment. Studies grounded in self-determination theory demonstrate that autonomous, value-based motivation supports persistence, resilience, and openness to feedback—all of which are vital in emotionally demanding fields such as special education (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Finally, communicative culture, although often framed as a pedagogical or social skill, appears in the literature as a psychologically rooted construct that draws on self-awareness, perspective taking, and ethical orientations (Littlewood, 2014; Friend & Cook, 2017). It is crucial for establishing effective interaction with parents, colleagues, and multidisciplinary teams.

These relationships are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Psychological Determinants and Their Projected Impact on Socio-Pedagogical Competence

Determinant	Main Psychological Function	Expected Contribution to Socio-Pedagogical Competence
Emotional intelligence	Emotion recognition and regulation	Managing stressful interactions; maintaining supportive climate
Empathy / social sensitivity	Perspective taking, responsiveness to others	Building trust with children and families; inclusive attitudes
Professional reflection	Critical self-analysis, meaning-making	Adapting strategies; improving quality of support over time
Self-regulation	Control of impulses, attention, and affect	Stable behaviour in complex situations; reduction of reactive responses
Internal professional motivation	Autonomous goal pursuit, value commitment	Persistence, engagement in learning, readiness to face difficulties
Communicative culture	Coherent, ethical interaction with others	Effective collaboration with parents, teams, and institutional actors

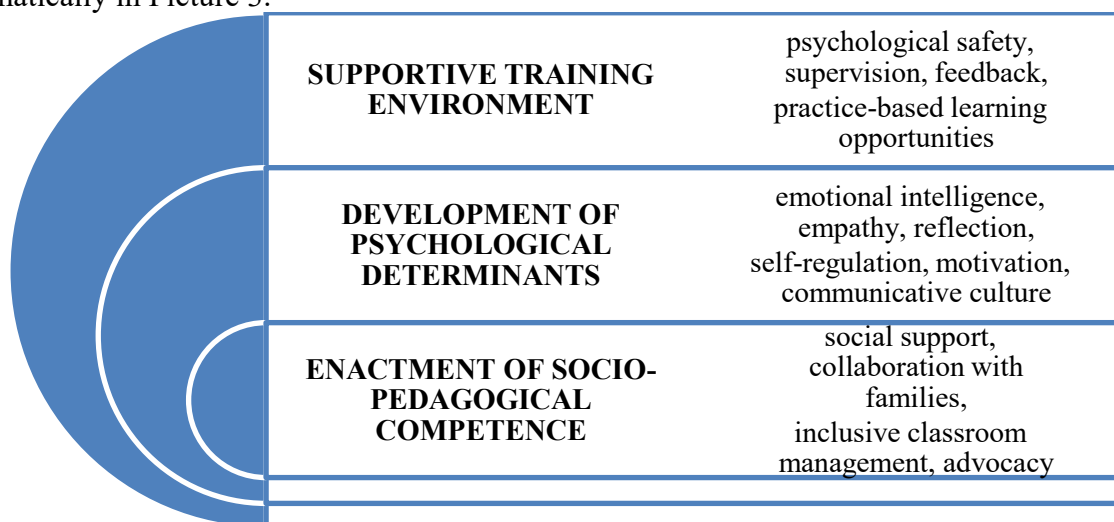
The pattern visible in Table 3 supports the idea that socio-pedagogical competence is psychologically scaffolded rather than purely behavioural: what teachers do in inclusive contexts is constrained and enabled by how they feel, think, and regulate themselves.

A second major result of the review concerns the interaction between internal determinants and external training conditions. Across international and Kazakhstani studies, psychological

determinants are rarely treated as fixed traits; instead, they are shown to be sensitive to the quality of the learning environment, the presence of supervision, and the structure of practice-based experiences (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2017; Kulmagambetova, 2020; Sagyndykova, 2022).

Research grounded in self-determination theory indicates that environments which support autonomy, competence, and relatedness tend to foster higher emotional self-regulation, more adaptive coping strategies, and deeper professional engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In teacher education, this translates into the importance of psychologically safe, dialogic, and feedback-rich contexts. When future special educators experience respect, constructive guidance, and opportunities for voice, their emotional intelligence and reflective capacities are more likely to develop in a sustained way (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Day, 2019).

Kazakhstani studies further show that in programmes where supervision, mentoring, and collaborative activities are integrated into training, students report higher professional motivation and a stronger sense of self-efficacy in dealing with inclusive classroom situations (Aitbayeva, 2021; Omarova, 2019; Sagyndykova, 2022). Conversely, in environments characterised by excessive formalism, weak feedback, or limited practice, psychological determinants tend to remain underdeveloped, and socio-pedagogical competence is described in more declarative than functional terms. These relationships can be visualised as a “psychological activation pathway”, presented schematically in Picture 3.



Picture 3. Psychological Activation Pathway in the Development of Socio-Pedagogical Competence

The figure highlights that environmental support and psychological determinants are mutually reinforcing: a well-designed programme nurtures emotional and reflective capacities, and these capacities, in turn, enable students to make fuller use of learning opportunities.

A third result of the analysis is conceptual rather than descriptive: it concerns how the competence profile of the future special educator should be reframed when psychological determinants are taken seriously.

First, the literature suggests that socio-pedagogical competence should be interpreted as a multi-level construct, where observable behaviours (e.g., collaboration with families, mediation of conflicts, support for social adaptation) rest on deeper emotional, cognitive, and motivational processes (Goleman, 1995; Ainscow, 2020; Mitchell, 2014). This implies that assessment of competence cannot be limited to checklists of actions or knowledge tests. Instead, evaluation tools need to include indicators of emotional regulation, empathy, and reflective capacity—such as reflective journals, observation protocols targeting interaction quality, or self-report measures carefully integrated into supervision.

Second, the review indicates that many of the difficulties reported by novice special educators—burnout, emotional exhaustion, feelings of incompetence in inclusive classrooms—can be interpreted not only as systemic or organisational problems, but also as signs of insufficient development of psychological determinants during training (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Day, 2019). This does not place “blame” on individuals; rather, it underlines the responsibility of training programmes to explicitly cultivate emotional and reflective skills, rather than assuming they will emerge spontaneously.

Third, the findings point to the need for intentional alignment between curriculum design and psychological goals. Practice-oriented components such as internships, case studies, and role-plays are most effective when they are coupled with guided reflection and emotional support, rather than being treated as purely technical exercises (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Friend & Cook, 2017). In such settings, psychological determinants are not only activated but also stabilised as enduring professional resources.

Taken together, the results of this review support three overarching interpretations:

1. Socio-pedagogical competencies are rooted in psychological determinants. Emotional intelligence, empathy, reflection, self-regulation, motivation, and communicative culture form an interconnected psychological system that underpins competent socio-pedagogical action in inclusive contexts.
2. These determinants are malleable and context-sensitive. They develop most robustly in training environments that are emotionally safe, practice-rich, and supervision-supported, where students are invited to reflect critically on their experiences and receive sustained feedback.
3. The preparation of future special educators must be re-designed with psychological goals in mind. Without explicit attention to psychological determinants, socio-pedagogical competence risks remaining a formal construct that is weakly expressed in real professional behaviour.

In this sense, the review not only summarises existing research, but also argues for a psychologically informed model of competence development that can guide future empirical studies and the redesign of special educator training programmes.

Conclusion. The review carried out in this article shows that the socio-pedagogical competencies of future special educators cannot be understood solely as a set of externally observable skills. Behind such behaviours lies a network of psychological determinants that includes emotional intelligence, empathy and social sensitivity, professional reflection, self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, and communicative culture (Goleman, 1995; Brackett & Rivers, 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Littlewood, 2014). These determinants function not as isolated traits, but as an interconnected system that shapes how future teachers perceive educational situations, regulate their own reactions, and choose ways of interacting with children, families, and colleagues. When this psychological system is weak or fragmented, socio-pedagogical competence remains fragile and situational; when it is sufficiently developed, competence acquires a stable, value-based character and can be enacted across a variety of demanding contexts (Ainscow, 2020; Mitchell, 2014).

An equally important conclusion concerns the role of the training environment. The analysis of international and Kazakhstani studies suggests that psychological determinants are highly sensitive to the socio-psychological climate of university programmes. Environments that provide psychological safety, constructive feedback, supervision, and opportunities for practice-based learning tend to foster higher levels of emotional regulation, reflection, and professional self-efficacy in future special educators (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2017; Kulmagambetova, 2020; Sagyndykova, 2022). Conversely, formalistic or overload-focused programmes, in which reflective dialogue and emotional support are marginal, risk producing graduates who know the language of inclusion but struggle to cope with its psychological demands

in real classrooms. Thus, psychological determinants and training conditions must be considered together: neither can compensate for the absence of the other.

From a practical standpoint, the findings imply that special educator preparation should be deliberately redesigned with explicit psychological goals. It is not enough to add separate courses on inclusive education or special pedagogy; programmes need built-in mechanisms for developing emotional intelligence and empathy (e.g. through structured reflection on practice, analysis of emotionally charged cases), for strengthening self-regulation and motivation (e.g. via mentoring and individual goal-setting), and for cultivating a communicative culture in interaction with families and multidisciplinary teams (Friend & Cook, 2017; Day, 2019). Such interventions are most effective when they are continuous, integrated into practicum experiences, and supported by supervisors who model the very socio-emotional competencies expected from students.

At the same time, this review has certain limitations. It relies on existing theoretical and empirical work, which is uneven across countries and often concentrates on general teacher education rather than the specific context of special educators. Many psychological constructs are operationalised differently across studies, which complicates direct comparison. Future research would therefore benefit from empirical studies that test the proposed conceptual model, use mixed methods to examine how particular determinants (for example, emotional intelligence or reflective capacity) develop over the course of training, and explore culturally specific factors in the Kazakhstani context.

Overall, the article argues for a psychologically informed view of socio-pedagogical competence: one that recognises the deep connections between what special educators know, what they value, how they feel, and how they act. By foregrounding psychological determinants within competence-based frameworks, teacher education institutions can better align their curricula with the real emotional and social challenges of inclusive practice and, ultimately, contribute to more humane and effective support for children with special educational needs.

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