

Factors Affecting the Inclusive Education of Special Need Children on The Basis of Teacher's Attitude and Concerns

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¹Acquisition of data, modified and finalized the manuscript

²Analysis and interpretation of data

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⁵Revising the article critically for important intellectual content

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A B S T R A C T

Background: Inclusive education is a global agenda, generally inclusion in education means full inclusion of children with various abilities in all aspects of schooling that other children have. Teachers have been seen as key persons to implement inclusive education and considered to play a substantial role in the implementation of such educational change.

Objective: To see the factors that influence the attitude and concerns of teachers regarding the inclusive education of special needs children.

Methodology: It was a cross sectional survey. Sample of 100 (50 mainstream school and 50 special education) teachers were taken by using a convenient sampling technique. The study was conducted from October 2017 to December 2017 in two special education center school of government and two private mainstream schools of Lahore, Pakistan. A questionnaire containing two sections was used to collect data. A sheet containing demographic details of study participants and associated factors and Sentiments, Attitude, and Concerns (SACIE-R), data was gathered and analyzed using SPSS-version 21.

Results: 89% were females and 11% were males. The teacher type (mainstream and special) had a statically significant effect on attitude towards inclusive education by showing p value=0.02. Variables like gender, age, and contact with person having disability, experience, education, and confidence levels all had a significant impact on the teacher's attitude.

Conclusion: It was concluded that all children can learn when teaching is effective and meets individual strengths and needs. There must be an emphasis on changing schools' culture for providing resources and to build enough capacity in special as well as regular schools to offer new opportunities to pupils who experience difficulties in learning.

Introduction

Inclusive education has been defined as a process that intends to respond to the student's diversity through enhancing their participation and reduces the elimination from and within education. This statement includes involvement and achievement of students mainly those who are at high risk of being marginalized and excluded for many different reasons. It takes inclusive education beyond disability issues.¹

According to researchers, educators should encourage learning environments that pay special attention to the issues regarding social justice, critical reflection, collaboration, diversity, care, and community. The teachers in favor of inclusive education tend to be caring as they create optimal opportunities for learning, considering school as a community and value personal and inter personal relationships for every child.^{2, 3}

Educating children with disabilities is considered an important goal in many countries because education systems are changing drastically in last few decades. It has been mentioned by some researchers that defined inclusion as the process of teaching pupils with disabilities in regular education settings.⁴ According to the American Psychiatric Association, terminologies like special education needs refer to the need of a population of individuals who have sensory and communication disorders, learning disabilities and behavioral issues.⁵

Parents of children with special needs prefer to choose mainstream schools for their children because they have motives for choosing a regular education setting which helps them to participate and interact socially in their peer group. Parents believe and expect that the physical integration of their children will increase the children's level of social interaction. While, In a study conducted in 2005 it was concluded that by going to a regular school will not result in the enhancement of socialization and friendships among peers. This is supported by the disability type a person is having. Several studies have seen that children with disabilities are at a very difficult level to be accepted by their peers, experience less friendships and rarely become the part in regular classrooms.⁶

Yet, researches are limited but it has been concluded in a study that there is enough evidence that the person with disability is not popular in both special and mainstream school settings. Based on these findings, it looks obvious that more attention should be drawn to social participation for the implementation of inclusive education.⁷

To see the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education, firstly the term "attitude" meaning must be cleared. Social psychology defines it in various aspects however some other researchers defined it as a person's point of view or disposition regarding a particular object that can be an idea, thing or person. Teachers don't need skills and knowledge solely to be successful in inclusive education but also, they must have a positive attitude, concerns & sentiments to work in this field. This is essential for the assurance of an inclusive future in the classrooms. The successful implementation of inclusive education chiefly depends on the attitudes and concerns teacher have towards inclusion policy as the studies that

have been done to investigate these aspects have proved this as a vital marker.⁸

Researchers have proved that the effectiveness level of inclusion is important for teachers because they are the key persons, school workforce, and those who are responsible for the implementation of inclusive services.

Teacher's views about inclusive education must be in mind as there is a likelihood that their perceptions can alter their level of acceptance, attitude and behavior towards disable students.⁹ Furthermore the attitudes and concerns of mainstream teacher's can have some bearing on the successfulness of inclusive education policies. Variables and demographics like educator's gender, age, qualification, experience, type and severity of disability can have influence on the attitude and concerns of teachers about the inclusion of children with disabilities.¹⁰

The objective of this study is to see the factors that influence the attitude and concerns of teachers towards the inclusive education of special needs children.

Methodology

A cross-sectional survey was conducted to see the factors that affects the inclusive education of special need children based on the teacher's attitude and concerns. The study was conducted from October 2017 to December 2017, by focusing on four schools (two special education center school of government and two private mainstream schools) in the Gulberg, Lahore. A total sample of 100 teachers (89 women and 11 men) participated in this study by using the convenient sampling technique. The first group comprises of the 50 mainstream classroom teachers (43women and 7men). The second group was also made up of 50 special education teachers (46women and 4men). All teachers who agreed initially to participate in the study returned the complete questionnaires (response rate 100%). A questionnaire having 2 sections was used for the collection of data from the study participants. The first part was designed to gather selected demographic details of participants. The second part, sentiments, attitudes, and concerns about inclusive education, revised edition (SACIE-R) developed by forlin et. al was used. It consisted of a 15 items scale containing 5 statements on sentiments, 5 on attitude, and 5 on concerns. Analyses were based on four categories: Strongly Disagree,

Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree. Previous studies supported that SACIE-R is a reliable instrument having the alpha value 0.83, was used to measure the abovementioned parameters.¹¹ The data was analysed using descriptive statistics in the form of percentages. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS version-21. Group means standard deviations were computed.

Results

The current study objective was to investigate the factors that effect the attitude and concerns of teachers towards the inclusive education of special need children. Effect of teacher's placement (Mainstream and Special institutes) and their education (bachelor, master and higher studies) and interactive effect of these two on concerns and attitude regarding inclusive education. MANOVA was used to assess the aforementioned objectives. In this regard, effect of teacher's placement (Mainstream and Special institutes) and their education (bachelor, master, and higher studies) served as independent variables, and concerns and attitude regarding inclusive education were the dependent variables. Independent sample t-test was used to see the difference of Attitude and Concerns between two Genders.

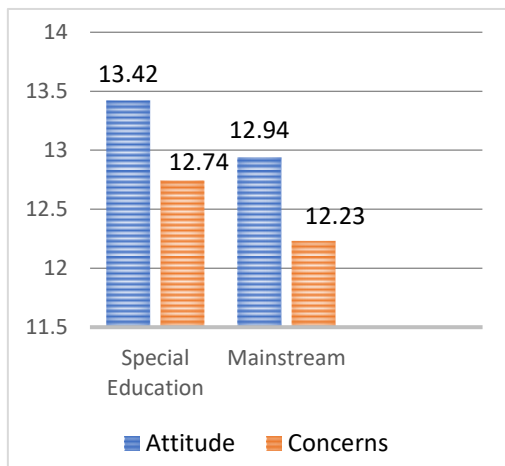


Figure 1: Distribution of Study Sample

It showed that special education teachers hold more positive attitude towards inclusive education than mainstream teachers. And about concerns special education teachers are more concerned than mainstream teachers.

Table I depicts that there were 89% females and 11% males who participated in the study. Regarding the teachers qualification, 69% of teachers were holding a master's degree. 29% were graduates and 2% holding other educational degrees. 67% of teachers had significant interaction with disabled children. 55% of teachers had 0 to 4 years of experience, 30% were having 5 to 10 years' experience, 10% had 11 to 15 years' experience and only 5% were with 16 years and above.

Table No I: Demographics of the Participants (n=100)

Demographic Factors	Respondent Subgroups	Total	(%)
Gender	Males	11	11%
	Females	89	89%
Qualification	Graduate	29	29%
	Master's Degree	69	69%
	Others	02	02%
Family Member with Disability	Yes	23	23%
	No	77	77%
Teaching experience	0-4 years	55	55%
	5-10 years	30	30%
	11-15 years	10	10%
	16 or more	05	05%
Significant Interaction with a person having Disability	Yes	67	67%
	No	33	33%

Table II showed statistically significant effect of teacher's education and their type according to their placement on Attitude and concerns and on overall combined scores of them regarding inclusive education. The teacher type (mainstream and special) had a statically significant effect on attitude towards inclusive education. Education (masters or bachelors) had no statistically significant effect on any of the case.

Table II: Effect of type of teacher & their educational status

	SS	MS	P	%
Main Effect of Type of Teachers (Mainstream, Special Education)				
Attitude	68.41	68.41	0.001***	0.12
Concerns	0.05	0.05	0.93	0.00
Total	152.76	152.76	0.02**	0.05
Main Effect of Education (Masters and Bachelors)				
Attitude	1.16	1.16	0.64	0.002
Concerns	3.58	3.58	0.46	0.01
Total	0.38	0.38	0.91	0.00

Table III Shows that gender of the teachers has no significant difference neither on attitude nor concerns, with $t(98) = 0.59, p > 0.05$ and $t(98) = 0.17, p > 0.05$ respectively, ensuring the nonsignificant differences among males and females.

Table III: Effect of Gender

	Mean \pm SD		<i>p</i> value
	Male	Female	
Attitude	13.36 \pm 2.80	12.91 \pm 2.36	0.56
Concerns	12.63 \pm 2.33	12.49 \pm 2.66	0.87

Table IV showed that the teachers who had interaction with special children were having a significant correlation with the concerns towards inclusive education $r(100) = .21, p < .05^*$. The results also revealed that the teachers who were experienced were more concerned about the inclusive education of special needs children. $F(3, 99) = 3.12, p < .05^*$.

Table IV: Effect of Type of Related Factors

Variables	F	<i>p</i>	Partial eta
Interaction with Person Having Disability			
Attitude	0.30	0.58	0.00
Concerns	9.08	0.003**	0.08
Experience			
Attitude	1.07	0.37	0.03
Concerns	3.12	0.03*	0.07

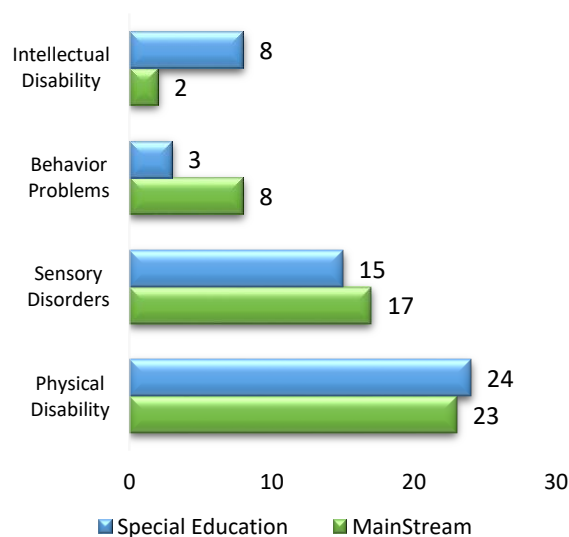


Figure II: Teacher's Priority for Inclusion of Children according to the Type of Disability.

Figure II showed that lowest score was given to the children with intellectual disability and behavioral problems while teachers (mainstream and special education) were more positive about the inclusion of persons with Sensory Disorders like visual and hearing impairment and physical disabilities.

Discussion

The practice of inclusive education, quality of educational resources and the training received by students can be influenced by beliefs about disability, attitudes, ethnicity, and concerns of teachers.¹² Many regular education teachers show frustration and negative attitude towards inclusive education because they feel unprepared to work with students having disabilities which can also lower their academic standards.¹³ Moreover, their access to the resources, materials as well as support from a specialist may also affect the attitude and confidence of teachers about inclusive education.¹⁴ LeyRoy and Simpson have documented that when the experience of teachers with students mainly with special needs intensify, it causes their confidence level to grow which change their negative attitude invariably. The majority of studies about attitudes and concerns of teachers toward inclusive education were conducted in western countries.

Attitudes as well as the concerns of teachers are important because they are the potential predictors of success or failure of inclusion.¹⁵ In Thailand, a study was conducted to examine the attitudes and concerns of teachers about attitude, knowledge, concerns and coping strategies regarding inclusive education in 2007 and they found a significant correlation between participants' attitudes and concerns.¹⁶ Which are also consistent with the result of our study.

A study conducted to see the Pakistani teacher's attitudes towards inclusive education concluded that teachers who had more experience held a more positive attitude about the inclusion of children with disabilities. This finding also supports the results of the present study.¹⁷

Another study was conducted by Joseph Agbenyega and he found that the teachers expressed negative attitudes and concerns because they believed that regular schools are not the appropriate place for students with disabilities particularly those with sensory

impairments. Ghanizadeh et al. examined teachers attitude and reported no significant attitude as the teachers agreed on the point that those pupils should go to special education schools instead of mainstream schools. However, in the current study significant effect has been seen by mainstream and special education teachers regarding attitudes towards inclusive education.¹⁸

As described earlier that the teacher's attitude and concerns about inclusive education are related to several variables. Several aspects like training, resources and teachers are seen to be important in the process of implementing inclusive education. As suggested by many authors they are key factors for implementing inclusive education.¹⁹ Some studies stated that teachers have positive attitude about the general philosophy of inclusive education,²⁰ whereas many others have supported the fact that teachers have grim uncertainties for this.²¹

A study conducted by Anke de Boer et al. to see the regular school teacher's attitude about inclusive education found that teachers who have more experience hold a more positive attitude than those with less experience. Similar to the results of our study which revealed that the more experience the teachers had the more concerned they were about the inclusive education.

The work by Alghazo et al. in 2004 concluded that teachers who have one to five years of experience in teaching exhibit more positive attitude towards inclusive education than those who have more experience like 6-11 years or more than 12 years of experience.²² Glaubman and Lifshitz also found the same results in their work. Conversely, Avramidis and Kalyva described in their study that teachers with more experience held more significant attitude towards inclusion than teachers with less experience. Similar findings were exposed by Gojkovic et al. among Serbian teachers.²³ Moreover Batsiou et al. also found a significantly positive correlation between experience and attitude of teachers. Likewise, the findings of the present study revealed that the more experience the teachers had the more concerned they were about inclusive education $p < .05$. The experience showed statistically significant differences in combined scores of sentiments, attitude and concerns.

Many teachers find it difficult and stressful to the inclusion of students with disabilities into a mainstream

setting. As it has been viewed by some educators as a contributing factor to increase workload. In the work of Daane et al. they have mentioned that teachers are concerned about the inclusive education of children with disabilities.²⁴ Similarly, in the present study, the teachers who know about disability had a statistically significant difference in concerns towards inclusive education by showing $p < .05$. Researchers have recorded that mainstream teachers are apprehensive for meeting the individual needs of students with disabilities due to the lack of support from the school administrative personnel to support inclusive education. Hurley revealed that the teachers are more concerned for inclusive education and this increased level of concern arises from the teacher's need for the progress of every student in an inclusive classroom setting.²⁵ Likewise, another comparative study by Cornoldi et al. concluded that teachers were concerned about the inclusion of children with disabilities. Results of the present work also showed a significant affect in terms of concern of teachers towards inclusive education. Research conducted in Australia by Pearl Subban and Umesh Sharma disclosed that those who have close interaction with a person having disability show less concern for inclusive education implementation.²⁶ Contrary to this, it was found that the teachers who had significant interaction with a person of disabilities were having a significant correlation with the concerns towards inclusive education i.e. $p < .05$. Whereas, similar findings were observed in a study that the sustained personal contact with a person having disability or constant exposure to such persons results in more positive feeling of teachers towards inclusive education and high chances of acceptance by teacher.²⁶ In favor of these findings, results of another study showed that teachers who were acquainted with a person of disability had a significantly positive attitude about inclusive education than those who were not in acquaintance with a person having disability.²⁷

Several studies have been reported that the attitude of teachers differentiate according to the type of disability students have. Cook in his work has pointed out that children with disabilities like ADHD or behavioral problems and learning disabilities are rejected by mainstream teachers than those with sensory problems like visual impairment.²⁸ Alghazo and Naggat Gaad in

their study found that teachers have a positive attitude towards students with physical disabilities and sensory problems. Though they were more negative about the pupils with behavioral problems and MR. Similar findings were seen in the work of Glaubman and Lifshitz in 2001. Issawi et al. in their study mentioned that the lowest score was given to the individuals with MR and behavioral problems, while teachers were more positive about the inclusion of persons with Sensory impairments like visual and hearing impairment and physical disabilities.²⁹ The results of this study revealed that mainstream and special education teachers are more positive for the inclusion of persons with physical and sensory issues while less priority was given to those with behavioral problems or ADHD and Mental Retardation.

Conclusion

We concluded that when teachers are concerned and have a positive attitude, adequate knowledge, skills, expertise and support by other specialists, it raises their confidence level to work with students in inclusive classrooms.

Recommendations: Collaboration between special education & mainstream teachers is very important. For this purpose, workshops should be conducted for teaching students with special needs and more efforts should be drawn to it. Provision of sufficient resources for the inclusive classes and support to inclusion by school principals, administrators, teachers and students is also recommended.

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