

Investigating Gender, School Type and their Joint Influence on Teachers' Attitude towards Inclusive Practices

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Abstract— Understanding how to be creative in order to make our schools a welcoming environment for all pupils is at the heart of the inclusive education approach. Teachers can use their imagination in several ways to improve their teaching and engage all students in the learning process. The purpose of this study was to assess how teachers felt about inclusive education in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis. The assessment was carried out using a descriptive survey method. An online survey was conducted of 308 (195 male and 113 female) teachers using a random sampling method. Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education (TASTIE) standardized by Sood and Anand (2014) was used by the researcher for data collection. Parentage analysis, mean, SD, and two-way ANOVA were used to examine the data. The findings revealed that teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education differ significantly depending on their gender and type of school. Govt. teachers are more likely to favour inclusive education than private teachers. Teachers must be adaptable to meet the varying demands of each child. Children with disabilities have different levels of functioning, from being able to do things on their own to needing a lot of help. For them to be included, pedagogy and resources need to be changed.

Keywords:

COVID-19, Inclusive Education, Perception, Special Children, UNICEF

Introduction:

Inclusive education is the right way to ensure all students have a chance to come to school, learn, and achieve. Inclusive education places all students in the same classes and schools. It means learning opportunities for marginalized groups, including disabled children and language minorities. Inclusion systems recognize students' unique contributions in the classroom and allow diverse groups to grow together, benefiting everyone (UNICEF, 2017). The New Brunswick Association for Community

Living (NBACL) asserts that inclusive education is not just for some children. A child does not need to be ready for participation. Children are always ready to attend regular classes and schools. They do not have to earn the right to take part (NBACL, 2022). A creative way of thinking about how to make our schools a welcoming place for all children is through the lens of inclusive education. Teachers can be inventive by finding novel ways to teach or creating lessons that allow for participation from all students (UNICEF, 2022). Inclusion in education is a concept that embodies our wish for all of our students to feel respected and accepted throughout their life (The Power of Letting Children Learn Together, 2022). According to the NEP 2020, it is important to provide children with special education needs with the same opportunity to obtain a quality education as other children (NEP, 2020). According to research from the World Bank Group (2020), India's educational system has improved in recent years, but it still faces hurdles in terms of providing an equitable education. Specifically, studies have shown that the most significant impediment to social and inclusive education in India is a negative attitude towards students with special needs, learning problems, and disabilities (Agbenyega 2007; Avoke 2002). Teachers must be able to handle disabled children with ease and comfort during pandemics and other difficult times (APA, 2020). They are capable of designing a learning experience that is pleasurable. If they keep a good attitude, they can form strong ideas about the educational growth of all children, even those with special needs. Special needs require an approach that will meet their special requirements (Para, 2021). Attitude plays an important role in our lives, especially for a teacher. It has a variety of effects on pupils

and has the potential to impact their learning experience. People with a positive attitude and frame of mind will experience less stress, which will allow them to make better decisions and boost their productivity, resulting in better health and fewer sick days. As a teacher, you will occasionally endure tension that will follow you home (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2020). Rather than obsessing about it, look for methods to relieve your tension constructively. People's attitudes have a significant impact on their actions. Attitudes are a collection of information, feelings, and reactions to people, events, and circumstances that are largely consistent (Rot, 1994). All of this enables us to predict their behaviour in a variety of scenarios based on our knowledge of their views. For example, if we understand teachers' sentiments towards children from marginalized groups, we might anticipate whether they would be nice or unpleasant when encountering children with disabilities. The willingness of an attitude component involves the preparedness for greater or lesser participation (Hardin-Fanning & Ricks, 2017). For example, by evaluating teachers' attitudes about inclusion in both primary and secondary schools, we may determine to what degree instructors are willing to promote the inclusion of students with disabilities and other developmental issues into the educational system. Attitudes towards inclusion include attitudes towards the education of children with various developmental challenges, as well as attitudes about a school's obligation to provide quality education to all students (Grand Canyon University, 2016). Teachers must know how to identify children with special needs and adapt their teaching and learning strategies to match these students' requirements to overcome these problems or hurdles to inclusive education in the Indian environment. Among the significant barriers are negative attitudes of teachers, students, and society, (Morina, 2017; Cooper et al., 2020), physical obstacles (ramps, etc.), curriculum pedagogy, language and communication, socioeconomic issues, money, the organization and structure of the educational system, and policies (Ramaswamy, 2013). Most

schools confront physical impediments, such as learning centres that are physically inaccessible, buildings or rooms that are badly maintained, and they are hazardous because of their poor conditions (Para, 2021). The key to successful inclusive education is accepting, understanding, and attending to student differences and diversity, which can include physical, cognitive, academic, social, and emotional differences (McManus, 2017). So, if we want to make the education system better, we need to find out how teachers feel about inclusive education.

Objectives:

1. To study the influence of gender, type of school, and their interaction attitude towards inclusive education among secondary school teachers

Hypotheses:

For the above objectives the following null hypothesis was formulated:

H₀:2.1 There is no significant influence of gender on the perception of teachers towards inclusive education.

H₀:2.2 There is no significant influence of the type of school on the perception of teachers towards inclusive education.

H₀:2.3 Teachers' perceptions towards inclusive education are not significantly influenced by interactions between gender and type of school.

Method

Procedures

The investigation was conducted using a descriptive cross-sectional survey method. The research was carried out exclusively online on secondary school teachers in the Kashmir valley. Before conducting the study, permission was obtained from the respondents via email and WhatsApp. After that, a questionnaire was then sent to their respective e-mail addresses and the information was obtained through Google Forms in CSV format.

Participants

The questionnaire was sent to 500 teachers from different secondary schools, of which 351 teachers responded. A total of 43 questionnaires were discarded because 50% of the information was missing. As a result, 308 teachers were retained in the final study. The mean age of the participants was 33.40. Out of 308 teachers, 195 are male and 113 are female, whereas 212 belong to government secondary schools and 96 are from private secondary schools.

Measures

Teachers Attitude Scale towards Inclusive Education (TASTIE-SA) standardized and validated by Vishal Sood and Arti Annand(2014) was used for data collection. This scale has 47 items/ statements comprised of 4 dimensions. There is no right or wrong answers to the statements.

Results:

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Perception of Teachers towards Inclusive Education

Variable	Categories	N	Mean	SD	SEM	df	t	p
Gender	Male	195	59.61	5.347	.383	306	3.312**	.001
	Female	113	57.50	5.433	.511			
Type of school	Govt	212	59.60	5.297	.364	306	3.708**	.000
	Pvt	96	57.16	5.482	.559			

The goal was to investigate how teachers' perceptions of inclusive education were influenced by gender, school type, and their interactions. There were two levels of gender,

TASTIE is a self-administering and self-reporting three-point scale. Items of the scale are in statements form requiring information for each item on either of the three options on a continuum as follows; Agree, Undecided and Disagree.

Statistical Treatment

Microsoft Excel 2019 and SPSS 20 were used to perform the analysis. The data was first converted to Excel format, and then coding and cleaning were performed. A second check was undertaken by exporting it into SPSS format and re-cleansing it. It was also used to check for missing values and make other necessary checks. The researcher performed statistical analysis using parentage analysis, mean and *SD*, and two-way ANOVA.

namely, males and females, while government and private were two levels of a type of school. Thus, the data were analysed using Two-Way ANOVA, and the results are shown in Table 3.

Table 2: Summary of 2X2 Factorial Design ANOVA

Source of Variance	SS	df	MSS	F	Sig.	η^2
Gender(A)	194.439	1	194.439	6.889**	.009	.022
TOS(B)	270.449	1	270.449	9.582**	.002	.031
AxB	9.975	1	9.975	.353	.553	.001
Error	8580.151	304	28.224			
Total	9169.883	307				

**Mean difference is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Influence of Gender on the perception of teachers towards inclusive education.

Table 2 shows that the F-Value for Gender is 6.889, which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level with $df = 1/307$. It demonstrates that the mean scores of male teachers differ significantly from those of female teachers. As a result, gender had a considerable influence on teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education. As a result, the null hypothesis H02.1 is rejected: there is no substantial influence of gender on teachers' perceptions of inclusive education. Further, the mean score of perception of male teachers is 59.61, which is significantly higher than female teachers, whose mean score of perception towards inclusive education is 57.50. It may, therefore, be said that male teachers have a more favourable perception of inclusive education than their female counterparts.

Influence of Type of School on the perception of teachers towards inclusive education.

Table 2 reveals that the F-Value for the type of school is 9.582, which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level with $df = 1$ out of 307. It demonstrates that the perceptions of teachers in government schools about inclusive education differ significantly from those in private schools. Therefore, there was a substantial effect of school type on teachers' perceptions of inclusive education. Therefore, the null hypothesis H02.2 that there is no influence of school type on teachers' perceptions of inclusive education is rejected. Further, the mean score of perception towards inclusive government teachers is 59.60, which is significantly higher than private teachers, whose mean score of perception towards inclusive education is 57.16. It may, therefore, be said that teachers working in government schools have a more favourable perception of inclusive education than their counterparts working in private schools.

Influence of interaction between Gender and Types of School on the perception of teachers towards inclusive education.

Table 2 shows that the F-Value for the interaction between gender and school type on teachers' perceptions of inclusive

education is 3.53, which is not significant. It shows that the mean perceptions of male and female teachers working in government and private schools are not significantly different. That is, there was no major effect of the interaction between gender and school type on teachers' perceptions of inclusive education. As a result, the null hypothesis H02.3 that there is no substantial influence of interactions between gender and school type on teachers' perceptions of inclusive education is not rejected. It may, therefore, be said that the perception of teachers towards inclusive education was found to be independent of the influence of interaction between genders and types of schools. As a result, the types of schools had a significant impact on teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education. Thus, the null hypothesis that there is no significant influence of the types of schools on the perception of teachers towards inclusive education is rejected. Additionally, government teachers have a mean perception score of 54.71, which is much higher than the mean perception score of 52.26 for private teachers. So, it could be said that teachers who work for the government are more open to inclusive education than teachers who work for private companies.

Findings:

- In general, teachers are optimistic about the inclusion of disabled children in mainstream schools. Teachers reported that inclusive education was a key factor in creating more self-confidence, ensuring equal social rights, and promoting the intellectual development of special children.
- 64% of teachers agree that the existing curriculum needs to be adjusted so that special needs children will not be left out.
- Teachers' perceptions of inclusive education were influenced by their gender significantly. Male teachers have more positive perceptions than their female counterparts.

- The perception of teachers toward inclusive education varies significantly by their type of school. Govt. teachers are more likely to favour inclusive education than private teachers.
- perception of teachers towards inclusive education was found to be independent of the influence of interaction between Gender and Types of School.

Discussion:

The study sought to ascertain how teachers viewed inclusive education in the aftermath of COVID-19. In general, the current study's findings revealed that teachers have a favourable view of inclusive education. The current study's findings are consistent with several earlier studies (Butakor et al., 2020; Dash et al., 2019; Kalita, 2017; &Stemberger & Kiswarday, 2018), which found that both elementary and secondary school teachers had a positive attitude toward inclusive education. In terms of the null hypotheses H02.1 and H02.2, our data suggest that gender (male & female) and school type (government & private) influence teachers' views toward inclusive education. The findings are consistent with those of (Kumar, 2016 & Bansal, 2016). The findings, however, contradict the observations of (Singh et al., 2020; Sharma, 2019; and Kaur & Kaur, 2015). Regarding H02.3, our findings show that the relationship between gender and school type does not affect teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education. The findings are consistent with those of (Singh & Singh, 2020; Sharma, 2019; and Kaur & Kaur, 2015), who discovered a substantial difference in teachers' perceptions of inclusive education based on their gender and school type. The DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing), a state-wide platform for school education, could be one of the main reasons for most teachers' positive attitudes. The platform is a multipurpose platform created for classroom education, foundational learning programs, and accessible learning for vulnerable and differently-abled learners and instructors. DIKSHA's inclusive education modules have improved teachers' understanding of inclusive education. Teachers must be adaptable to satisfy the changing needs of each

student. Children with disabilities have a spectrum of functioning needs, from minimal to high, and their inclusion necessitates pedagogical and resource adaptations. Teachers in the system have received relatively scant training on how to implement these changes. As a result, instructors lose motivation and feel powerless (UNESCO, 2019). As a result, children with disabilities must receive additional help at home, as well as education that is tailored to their specific requirements (Narvekar, 2020).

Conclusion:

Inclusion in education enhances self-confidence, ensuring equal social rights and intellectual development of children with disabilities. Teachers need to be sensitive to the social, educational, and psychological needs of special children. Teacher optimism regarding the education of children with special needs is undeniable. We need to integrate the community and society with the school. As a result of COVID-19, it becomes everyone's responsibility to foster positive social attitudes among special children so that they may not lag in their educational development. Thus, inclusive education is capable of cultivating and developing the abilities of special children, allowing them to receive a customized education. COVID-19 provides an opportunity to consider how the education system in the country could be planned to be inclusive of children with disabilities. The government, teachers, parents, and caregivers must all work together to eliminate educational disparities facing disabled students, particularly during times of calamity. The study includes secondary school teachers from the Kashmir valley teaching in general schools (2021-22 session). The study looked at things like gender and type of school, but it did not look at special education teachers or schools.

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