

Comparison of Attitude of Teachers and Concerns Towards Inclusive Education of Special Need Children

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Abstract:

Inclusive education is a global agenda, generally inclusion in education means full incorporation of children with various abilities in all aspects of schooling like normal children. Teachers have been seen as key persons to implement such educational change.

Objective:

To compare the attitude of teachers and concerns towards inclusive education of special need children.

Methods:

It was a cross sectional study with sample size of 100 (50 from the mainstream school and 50 from the special education) teachers by using convenient sampling technique. By using Sentiments, Attitude and Concerns (SACIE-R) about Inclusive Education Scale data were gathered and analyzed using SPSS version 21.0.

Results:

Females were more common (89%) than males. The teacher type (mainstream and special) had statistically significant (p value=0.02) effect on attitude towards inclusive education.

Conclusions:

Results of this study depicted that when teachers have adequate knowledge, expertise and supported by other specialists, it alters their attitude and concerns towards inclusive education.

Key words:

Children, Special Education, Teachers, Concerns, Attitude, Sentiments, Schools.

Introduction:

Educating children with disabilities is considered as an important goal in many countries because education systems are changing drastically in last few decades¹. According to American psychiatric association the terminologies like special education needs refers to the need of population of individuals who have sensory disorders, communication

disorders, learning disorders, motor skills disorders, behavior disorders and mental retardation². 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 issues³. To see the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education, firstly we must have a clear idea of the term "attitude". Social psychology defines it in various aspects, however, Gall *et al*, defined it as a person's point of view or disposition regarding a particular object that can be an idea, thing or person. To be successful in inclusive education, teachers do not only need to have skills and knowledge but also they must have positive attitudes and concerns for their work in this field. This is essential for the assurance of inclusive future in the classrooms. The successful implementation of inclusive education chiefly depends on the attitudes and concerns of teachers towards inclusion policy⁴. The attitude of teachers is also influenced by many variables and associated factors like type, severity level and nature of disability in children, training of teachers and availability of resources⁵. Teacher's perceptions about evolving inclusive education must be borne in mind as there is likelihood that their perceptions can alter their behavior and acceptance towards students with disabilities⁶. Furthermore, the attitudes and concerns of mainstream teachers can have some bearing on the success 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 disabilities⁷. Researchers have proved

that teacher's perception about the effectiveness level of inclusion is important because they are the key persons responsible for the implementation of inclusive services. According to a survey there were 10% of population of special need children having disabilities like sensory impairments, physical disability, mental retardation, learning disability and multiple disabilities. Among them only 2% had access to attain the institutional services⁸. Although researches are limited yet Mand J, in 2007 concluded that there is enough evidence about the person with disability is not popular in both special and mainstream school settings. On the basis of these findings, it looks obvious that more attention should be drawn to the social participation while implementing the concept of inclusive education⁹. Current study was aimed to compare the teacher's attitude and concerns towards inclusive education of students with disabilities and to examine the relationship between their attitude, concern and the selected demographic variables.

Methods:

A cross-sectional survey was conducted from August 2015 to October 2015 comprising 100 teachers (89 women and 11 men) of both genders of all age groups. The study focused on four schools in the city of Lahore. The first group comprises of the 50 mainstream classroom teachers (43 women and 7 men) the second group included 50 special education teachers (46 women and 4 men). A pre-tested questionnaire comprising of two sections was used to collect the data from the study participants. The first section was about to gather demographic details of participants. The second section was about sentiments, attitudes and concerns about inclusive education, revised edition (SACIE-R) developed by Forlin C *et al.*, was used to elicit participant's attitudes, concerns and sentiments toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular classes'. It consisted of a 15-item scale, divided in three parts: sentiments, attitudes and concerns. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics in the form of percentages. All teachers who agreed initially to participate in the study returned the complete questionnaires (response rate 100%). Group means and standard deviations were computed. The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version

21.0. MANOVA test was used to assess the aforementioned aims. In this regard, effect of teacher's placement (mainstream and special institutes) served as independent variables while concerns and attitude regarding inclusive education were the dependent variables.

Results:

Females were more common (89%) than males. While 47% individuals were from the age group 26-35 years, 26% were below the age of 25 years, 23% were between 36-45 years and only 4% were 46 years and above. Regarding the qualification, 69% teachers had headmaster's degree, 29% were graduates and 2% had other educational degrees. 23% teachers had a family member with disability.. Apart from this, 67% teachers had significant interaction with person having disability. In terms of their teaching experience, 55% had 0-4 years of experience, 30% had 5-10 years, 10% had 11-15 years and 5% had 16 years or more as shown in Table 1.

Demographic Factors	Respondent Subgroups	Total	Percentage (%)
Gender	Males	11	11
	Females	89	89
Age (years)	≤25	26	26
	26-35	47	47
	36-45	23	23
	3>46 years	04	04
Qualification	Graduate	29	29
	Masters	69	69
	Others	02	02
Family Member with Disability	Yes	23	23
	No	77	77
Significant Interaction with a person having Disability	Yes	67	67
	No	33	33
Teaching experience (years)	0-4	55	55
	5-10	30	30
	11-15	10	10
	>16	05	05

Table 1: Demographics of Study Participants

Special education teachers showed more positive attitude and were more concerned towards inclusive education than mainstream teachers as shown in Table 2.

Variables	-	M	S.D
Attitude	Mainstream	12.94	2.56
	Special	13.42	2.28
	Total	12.85	2.44
Concerns	Mainstream	12.23	2.76
	Special	12.74	2.63
	Total	12.58	2.67
Total	Mainstream	36.58	6.87
	Special	36.64	4.82
	Total	36.62	5.51

Table 2: Descriptive of Attitude and Concerns

Table 3 showed the statistical significant effect of teacher's type according to the placement on Attitude, concerns and overall combined scores of these three regarding inclusive education. The teacher type (mainstream and special) had statically significant effect on attitude towards inclusive education and so on overall scale totals by showing $p=0.001***$.

Variables	SE	MS	F	P	Partialeta
Attitude	68.41	68.41	12.91	0.001***	0.12
Concerns	0.05	0.05	0.01	0.93	0.00
Total	152.76	152.76	5.29	0.02**	0.05

Table 3: Effect of Type of Teacher {Special Education (SE), Mainstream (MS)}

The results revealed that gender of the teachers had no significant difference neither on attitude nor concerns, with $p>0.05^*$ and $p >0.05^*$ respectively. More experience teachers were more concerned about the inclusive education ($p <0.05^*$). The experience showed statically significant difference in combined scores of sentiments, attitude and concerns ($p<0.05^*$) as shown in Table 4.

	Variables	P	Partial eta
Male	Gender		
	Attitude	0.56	0.004
	Concerns	0.87	0.00
Female	Attitude	0.58	0.00
	Concerns	0.003**	0.08
Experience	Experience		
	Attitude	0.37	0.03
	Concerns	0.03*	0.07

Table 4: Effect of Type of Related Variables

Figure 1 showed that lowest score was given to the individuals with mental retardation that is 2% mainstream and 8% special education, and towards behavioral problems teachers were more positive by showing 8% mainstream and 3% special education teacher's score. While scoring towards other disabilities were like physical disability 23% mainstream and 24% special education, sensory disability 17% mainstream and 15% special education.

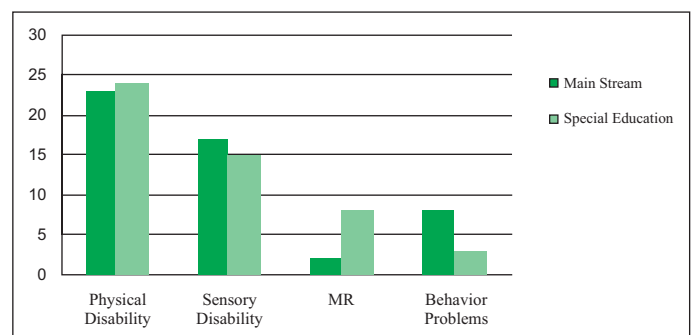


Figure 1: Attitude towards inclusion according to the type of disability

Discussion:

Attitudes as well as the concerns of teachers are important because they are the potential predictors of success or failure of the inclusion.¹¹ Many regular education teachers show anger, frustration and negative attitude towards inclusive education because they feel fearful and unprepared to work with students having disabilities in regular classrooms. They believe that it could lead their academic standards lower¹². Kalyva E *et al.*, examined school teachers attitude about the inclusion of children with disabilities and reported no significant attitude while

majority of them held negative attitude as the teachers agreed that those pupils should go to special education schools instead of mainstream schools.¹³ Similar findings were observed in a study by Kalyva E *et al.*, in 2007¹³. These findings are also in favor of the results of present study that special education teachers held more positive attitude towards inclusive education and were more concerned than mainstream teachers. To see the correlation between teacher's attitudes and concerns a study was conducted Changpinit S *et al.*, in Thailand and they found the significant results between these variables¹⁴. Though the results of current study also showed that the teachers had statically significant effect on attitude and concerns towards inclusive education. Daane C *et al.*, mentioned that special education and regular school teachers who have been experiencing inclusive education and have knowledge of disability are concerned about the inclusive education of children with disabilities¹⁵. Similarly, in the current study the teachers who have knowledge of disability had statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) in concerns towards inclusive education. As described earlier that the teachers attitude and concerns about inclusive education are related to several variables. As suggested by Meijer CJ, these are key factors in the development and implementation of inclusive education¹⁶. Significant difference has been observed between genders of teachers. The results of one study showed that males held less positive attitude towards inclusive education¹⁷. Similar findings were observed by Opdal LR, that females were supportive in terms of inclusive education than males¹⁸. On the contrary to these results, Parasuram K *et al.*, in 2006 reported no significant gender difference in his study¹⁹. Similarly our study didn't find any association between these variables. A study was conducted in Pakistan on mainstream and special education teachers to see their attitudes towards inclusive education and contributing factors, which concluded that teachers who had more experience held more positive attitude about inclusion of children with disabilities. This finding is also supported by many studies of other countries as well as the results of present study⁸. Another 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

more positive attitude than those with less experience. Similar findings were exposed in a research on Serbian teachers²⁰. 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. Likewise another comparative study by Subbanand Sharma exposed that school teachers were concerned about inclusion of children with disabilities. Results of present work also showed the significant affect in terms of concern of teachers towards inclusive education while in comparison to special education teachers, mainstream school teachers are less concerned. Research conducted in Australia disclosed that those who have close interaction with a person having disability show less concern about the implementation of inclusive education²¹. In favor of these findings, results of study conducted in Mumbai, India by Parasuram showed that teachers who were acquainted with a person of disability had significantly positive attitude about inclusive education than those who were not¹⁹. Several studies have been reported that attitude of teachers differentiate according to the type of disability students have. Cook in his work have pointed out that the children with disabilities like ADHD or behavioral problems and learning disabilities are rejected by mainstream teachers than those with sensory problems like visual impairment²². Researchers have proven through their work that teachers held positive attitude towards students with physical disabilities and sensory problems. Though, they were more negative about the pupils with behavioral problems and MR. Lifshitz *et al.*, mentioned in their work that 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 disabilities²³. The results of this study revealed that mainstream and special education teachers are more positive for the inclusion of persons with physical disabilities and sensory impairments while less priority was given to those with behavioral problems or ADHD and Mental Retardation.

Conclusions:

It is concluded that adequate knowledge, expertise and support by other specialists alters the attitude and concerns of teachers towards inclusive education.

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