

A Study on Elementary School Teachers Attitude towards Inclusive Education

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ARTICLE INFO ABSTRACT

Teachers positive attitude is most critically and consistently associated with successful implementation of inclusive education. The present study is conducted to find the attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education with a sample of 805 elementary school teachers working in four Districts of Tamil Nadu. An attitude scale constructed and validated by the investigator had been used to collect responses from the teachers. Collected data was analyzed with suitable statistical techniques like Mean, S.D, and 't' test. The findings of the study revealed that majority of the elementary school teachers have moderate favorable attitude towards inclusive education. Further, location of the school has no influence among the elementary school teachers' attitude towards inclusive education. But, significant difference was found between male and female, and trained and non- trained teachers. To increase the teachers' attitude towards inclusive education the stakeholders should give ear to teachers and to act on the demands they have expressed.

Key words: Inclusive Education, Attitude, Elementary School Teachers

Introduction

Education is the single greatest tool for achieving social justice and equality. The educational scene in India has undergone major change over the years, resulting in better provision of education and better educational practices. Ensuring the inclusion and equal participation of children with disabilities in early childhood care and education and the schooling system will also be accorded the highest priority (NEP, 2020). There is strong international focus on inclusion as the key to promoting the right to education, particularly children with diverse conditions (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Hutchinson & Martin, 2021). The core philosophy of inclusive education emphasizes the right of all children to learn together in regular classrooms without discrimination or segregation based on their diverse learning needs and profiles (Michelle, 2024). Notably, the key factor in achieving inclusion was the teachers' attitude, because positive perspectives promoted the acceptance of different learners (Lindner et al., 2023).

UNESCO (2019) stated in a report that 78,64,636 children with disabilities in India constituting of the total child population and three-fourths of children with the disabilities at the age of 5 years and one-fourth between 5-19 years do not go to any educational institutions. This is a bitter truth that children with disabilities are not getting quality access to education and other support services. Inclusion is commonly defined and understood in a variety of ways on a national and worldwide level (Hardy & Woodcock, 2015; Knight & Crick, 2021). Inclusive education is defined as "education in which students with disabilities have access to the standard curriculum in a general education classroom" (Bryant et al., 2019).

Teachers' Attitude towards Inclusive Education

An important factor in determining the success of inclusive education is the attitude of teacher. Teachers are the key actors in the implementation of inclusive education and that their positive attitude plays a significant role in the successful administration of the educational transformation (Boer et al., 2011). According to O'Brien (2000), the real key resource for successful inclusion lies inside the teacher head. Attitude of teachers is an important element that determine the success in the education of children with special needs (Alkahtani, 2016; Foreman, 2008). The success of inclusion is only possible when teachers show that they are receptive to

children with special needs (Beacham & Rouse 2011). Hull (2005) showed that the attitude of teacher is a critical element to promote integration and especially the academic success of students with special needs.

Attitude of teachers towards the education of children with special education needs have been proposed as a decisive factor in increasing participation of these children in school (Kuyini & Desai, 2007; Monsen & Frederikson, 2004; Sharma & Sokal, 2016; Van Der Veen, Smeets & Derriks, 2010). Now a days, most teachers work in contexts that includes children with special needs. The success of inclusive education depends to a large extent of these teachers (Mitchell, 2010) and teachers preparedness is one of the most important factors in the successful implementation of inclusive education. Several research studies have suggested that it purely depends on the teachers in terms of their belief, feelings and their willingness towards inclusive education (Symeonidou & Phtiaka, 2009). Studies have demonstrated that there is a link between teachers' training in special educational needs, their attitude towards inclusion and their inclusion practices (Beacham & Rouse, 2011; Florian, & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman (2008). Teachers had either positive or negative attitude towards inclusion (Bailey, Nomanbhoy & Tubpun, 2015; Yada & Savolainen, 2017; Cikili & Karaca, 2019). Teachers have moderate favorable attitude towards inclusive education (Kalita, 2017; Almahdi Bukamal, 2019; Lipika, 2020; Gowami, 2022). Male and female teachers differ significantly in their attitude towards inclusive education (Uka 2024; Lipika, 2020; Mohanty, 2020; Kumar, 2016). Teachers who have trained and not trained in children with special needs differ significantly in their attitude towards inclusive education (Uka, 2024; Goswami, 2022).

Review of Related literature

Uka (2024) explored the differences in primary school teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in Kosovo. For this study a sample of 49 males and 155 females were selected by using simple random Sampling. The findings of the study revealed that female teachers have more positive attitude towards inclusion than the male teachers; younger teachers are more open to inclusion than older teachers; teachers with prior experience with students with special needs are more receptive to inclusion; and teachers trained in inclusiveness have more positive attitudes towards inclusive education. The findings also revealed that there is a significant difference between teachers trained in inclusion and those who were not trained, and significant differences between teachers with prior experience with students with special needs and those without such experiences. Furthermore, there were no significant differences in teachers' attitudes towards inclusiveness between gender, and age groups.

Goswami (2022) studied the attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education. For this study the researcher selected a sample of 73 elementary school teachers from 10 schools of Golaghat district, Assam by using simple random sampling technique. The findings of the study indicates that 46.57% of teachers have average favourable attitude, 24.65% have most favourable attitude, 21.91% have moderate attitude and 1.36% have below average attitude towards inclusive education. The study also revealed that there exists no significant difference between attitudes of male and female elementary school teachers' attitude towards inclusive education and there exist a significant difference in the attitude of elementary school teachers in respect of personal experience with children with special needs. Furthermore, teachers having professional qualifications have more favourable attitude towards inclusive education than the teachers who does not have professional qualification.

Seema Tripathi (2021) studied the difference between male and female elementary school teachers' attitude towards inclusive education. For this study the investigator selected a sample of 91 teachers from 15 government primary schools of Aizawl city, Mizoram. The findings of the study revealed that there is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female elementary School teachers towards inclusive education.

Lipika (2020) studied the secondary school teachers attitude towards inclusive education. For this study she has selected 100 secondary School teachers from Gabharu block of Sonitpur district of Assam by random Sampling technique. The findings of the study revealed that most of the secondary school teachers possessed favourable attitude towards inclusive education and not a single teacher's attitude towards inclusive education was under the Category of unfavorable attitude. Further, the male teachers attitude towards inclusive education is higher than the female teachers and there exists significant difference between the attitude of male and female teachers attitude towards inclusive education.

Mohanty (2020) conducted a study and found that gender, teaching experience and locality were the factors for developing differential attitudes among the teachers as there were significant differences in the mean attitude scores of elementary School teachers towards various aspects of inclusive education with reference to gender, teaching experience and locality.

Paramanik (2018) made a study and found that there is a significant difference between rural and urban teachers in respect of their attitudes towards inclusive education. The study also indicates that there is no significant difference between male and female secondary school teachers in respect of their attitude towards inclusive education. Furthermore, the attitude of secondary school teachers towards inclusive education is moderate.

Kalita (2017) study found that most of the teachers have moderate level of attitude towards inclusive education and the male teachers attitude towards inclusive education is higher than the female teachers. The study also

found that more experienced teachers attitude towards inclusive education is slightly higher than that of less experienced teachers. Further, there is no significant difference between the male and female teachers and more experienced and less experienced primary school teachers attitude towards inclusive education.

Bansal (2013) examined the attitude of Primary School teachers towards inclusive education. For this study he has selected 80 Primary school teachers working in different primary schools located in Fatehabad District of Haryana. The findings of the study revealed that attitude of male teachers towards inclusive education is more positive as compared to female teachers; Urban primary school teachers attitude towards inclusive education is more positive as compared to rural school teachers. further, attitude of private school teachers towards inclusive education is more positive as compared to government school teachers.

Objectives of the Study

The present study has the following objectives

1. To find the level of attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education
2. To find the difference between male and female elementary school teachers attitude towards inclusive education
3. To find the attitude of teachers trained and not trained in children with special needs towards inclusive education
4. To find the difference between rural and urban elementary school teachers attitude towards inclusive education

Hypotheses of the Study

Based on the objectives the following null hypotheses were formulated for the present study

1. There will be no significant difference between male and female elementary school teachers attitude towards inclusive education.
2. There will be no significant difference between teachers trained and not trained in children with special needs attitude towards inclusive education.
3. There will be no significant difference between rural and urban elementary school teachers attitude towards inclusive education.

Methodology

Design

A descriptive survey research design was used for this study in order to find the elementary school teachers attitude towards inclusive education.

Population and Sample

The population of the present study includes of all the elementary school teachers working in Chennai, Chengalpattu, Kanchipuram and Thiruvallur Districts of Tamil Nadu. The investigator has selected 254 male and 551 female teachers as sample for the study.

Research Instrument used

In order to measure elementary school teachers attitude towards inclusive education the investigator constructed a scale i.e., "Elementary School Teachers Attitude towards Inclusive Education" which includes 41 items.

Statistical Techniques Employed

To analysis the data, investigator used descriptive and inferential statistics techniques. Mean, Standard Deviation were used in descriptive and 't' test was used in inferential statistical techniques.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Attitude of Elementary School Teachers towards Inclusive Education

Variable	Percentage level					
	Unfavorable Attitude		Moderate favorable Attitude		Favorable Attitude	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Elementary School Teachers Attitude towards Inclusive Education	188	23.35	586	72.80	31	3.85

It could be observed from about able, 3.85 percentage of elementary school teacher have highly favorable attitude towards inclusive education. 72.80 percentage of the teachers have moderate favorable attitude and

23.35 of elementary school teachers have unfavorable attitude towards inclusive education. The analysis reveals that majority of elementary school teachers have moderately favorable attitude towards inclusive education.

Table 2: Male and Female Teachers Attitude towards Inclusive Education

Gender	N	Mean	SD	't' value	Level of significance
Male	254	103.83	8.98	5.85	0.01
Female	551	109.11	10.25		

The 't' value computed in table 2 was found to be 5.85 and the needed values to be significant at 0.01 level is 2.58 and 0.05 level is 1.96. So, the calculated 't' value is higher than the table value at 0.01 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis 1 i.e., there will be no significant difference between male and female elementary school teachers attitude towards inclusive education has been rejected. It means there is significant difference in the attitude of male and female elementary school teachers towards inclusive education.

Table 3: Attitude of Teachers Trained and Not Trained in Children with Special Needs towards Inclusive Education

Training Status	N	Mean	SD	't' value	Level of significance
Teachers Trained in Children with Special Needs	483	126.03	10.74	15.91	0.01
Teachers Not Trained in Children with Special Needs	322	108.45	15.26		

It could be observed from table 3 the 't' value calculated on the basis of responses of teachers trained in children with special needs and not trained in children with special needs was found to be 15.91. The calculated 't' value is higher than the table value both at 0.01 and 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis 2 i.e., there will be no significant difference between the elementary school teachers trained and not trained in children with special needs is rejected. It means there is significant difference in the attitude of teachers trained and not trained in children with special needs towards inclusive education. The result also indicate that the means score of teachers trained in children with special need (126.03) is greater than that of teachers not trained in children with special needs (108.45).

Table 4: Rural and Urban Elementary School Teachers Attitude towards Inclusive Education

Location of the School	N	Mean	SD	't' value	Level of Significance
Rural	400	146.26	14.63	0.59	Not Significant
Urban	405	146.83	12.96		

The 't' value calculated in the table 4 was founded to be 0.59 and the needed values to be significant at 0.01 level is 2.58 and 0.05 level is 1.96. The calculated 't' value 0.59 is less than the table value at 0.01 and 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis 3 i.e., there will be no significant difference between rural and urban elementary school teacher attitude towards inclusive education has been accepted. It means that there is no significant difference in the attitude of rural and urban elementary school teachers towards inclusive education.

Findings with Discussion

- The finding of the study revealed that majority of elementary school teachers (72.80%) have moderate favorable attitude towards inclusive education. This finding is corroborate with the findings of the studies carried out by Goswami (2022), Lipika (2020), and Kalita (2017) who found that most of the teachers have moderate attitude towards inclusive education.
- The male and female elementary school teachers differ significantly in their attitude towards inclusive education. The result is consonance with the findings of the studies done by Uka (2024), Mohanty (2020) and Kumar (2016) who revealed that the male and female teachers differ significantly in their attitudes towards inclusive education. The study also revealed that the female teachers have more favorable attitude (109.11) towards inclusive education in comparison to the male teachers (103.83). This result is contrast with the findings of the studies done by Lipika (2020), Kalita (2017), and Bansal (2013) who found that male teachers have more favorable attitude towards inclusive education than the female teachers.
- Elementary school teachers who have trained and not trained in children with special needs differ significantly in their attitudes towards inclusive education. This finding is supported by Uka (2024), and Goswami (2022) studies and found that there exist a significant difference in the attitude of primary teachers towards inclusive education in respect of training in children with special needs.
- The rural and urban elementary school teachers do not differ significantly in their attitude towards inclusive education. This finding is contrast with the research study carried out by Paramanik (2018) who found that the rural and urban school teachers differ significantly in their attitude towards inclusive education.

Conclusion

Inclusive education is need of the hour keeping in view that population explosion and availability of limited resources to meet out educational and other demands of all members of population. But the success of this concept totally depends on teachers, their commitment and attitude towards disabled children who are to be imparted education in inclusive settings. Teachers are the real masons who lay the foundation of a nation committed to harmonic development. The findings of the present study reveal that 3.83% of elementary school teachers have highly favorable attitude towards inclusive education. Further, 72.80% of them have moderate favorable attitude, and 23.35% of teachers have unfavorable attitude towards inclusive education. This result advocate that to strengthen the inclusive education, the teachers, parents, society and government should collectively work to implement the policies of inclusive education. Best way to improve teachers attitude towards inclusion is to give ear to teachers and to act on the demands they have expressed. Further, there is a need of training, orientation programs related to inclusive education for non-trained teachers to make their attitude more favorable towards inclusive education.

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