



RESEARCH PAPER**An Analysis of Inclusive Education: A Study on the Relationship between Teachers and Students**

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive education aims to provide all students with access to a high-quality education. It promotes equal opportunities and ensures that every student, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. Inclusive education strives to break down barriers and provide equitable opportunity for everyone, regardless of background or circumstance. The goal of this study is to look at the impact of inclusive education on academic success and social inclusion. It involves making sure that teaching, curriculum, classrooms, play areas, and transportation are all accessible. This study aimed to investigate the attitudes and values regarding IE among students and teachers in Sindh, Pakistan. A questionnaire was designed for data collection, which included items on socio-demographic characteristics and measuring instruments. An online survey was conducted in a higher education institute where both teachers and students were offered to participate anonymously. A total of 107 teachers and 91 students participated in the survey. The survey results indicated that both teachers and students.

KEYWORDS Inclusive Education, Special Educational Needs, Students, Teachers

Introduction

Inclusive education (IE) is based on equality, student participation, community development, and respect for diversity. It can change discriminatory attitudes in the education system (Van Mieghem, Verschueren, Petry, & Struyf, 2020). Curran and Petersen highlighted that Inclusive Education (IE) not only provides an excellent educational environment for learners with disabilities but also helps to break down barriers and challenge stereotypes (Amor et al., 2019). The values of Inclusive Education (IE) serve as a foundation for teachers to acquire knowledge, enhance understanding, and utilize essential skills to work with students from diverse backgrounds and abilities. Education is a fundamental human right that must be accessible to all individuals, irrespective of their backgrounds or abilities. Implementing IE doesn't always require empirical evidence since it is a right that every student deserves (Moriña, 2019). The goal of inclusive education is to provide equal opportunities, safeguard fundamental human rights, promote social justice, establish a symbol of civilization, and eliminate discrimination (Krischler, Powell, & Pit-Ten Cate, 2019). Many developed countries like Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, etc. have laws to encourage Inclusive Education (IE). Some developing countries like India and the Philippines have similar laws. However, in Pakistan, the Education Bureau chose to implement a policy of including students with disabilities in mainstream schools instead of enacting legislation (Amjad & Manzar-Abbas, 2020).

Literature Review

After conducting literature reviews, it was found that there is insufficient evidence to support the effectiveness of IE. Heward conducted a study on the effectiveness of Individualized Education (IE) in improving the academic performance of students with learning disabilities. His findings suggest that the results of IE in enhancing the academic achievement of such students are mixed. While some studies reported positive outcomes, there were also instances where IE did not lead to significant improvements in academic performance (Basit, Ashfaq, Arif, & Gulshan, 2022). Students with learning disabilities did not consistently exhibit higher levels of self-esteem when placed in regular classrooms compared to special education settings, suggesting that inclusive education does not necessarily improve the self-esteem of students with special educational needs (Khalid et al., 2023). A study was conducted in Hong Kong by Lam and Yeung in 2005. The objective of the study was to compare the attitudes, self-concept, and social outcomes of students with SEN (Special Educational Needs) and those without SEN. The findings of the study revealed that students with SEN who were placed in inclusive classrooms had lower academic self-concept in comparison to their counterparts without any learning difficulties (Jahanzaib, Fatima, & e Nayab, 2019). There may be discomfort and negative attitudes when interacting with individuals with disabilities in inclusive education. These negative attitudes can lead to uncomfortable feelings, and they can also result in a reciprocal relationship between negative attitudes and discomfort (Ashraf, Zhu, & Rauf, 2018). Negative emotions can be considered a type of emotional stress that individuals may try to avoid. This avoidance may cause them to keep a social distance, which could further reinforce negative attitudes. This is why negative sentiments towards people with disabilities can impede the successful implementation of Inclusive Education (Yeo, Chong, Neihart, & Huan, 2019). A study was conducted on 94 pre-service teachers from China to explore the relationship between negative emotions and self-efficacy in inclusive practice. The study considered the effects of age, teaching experience, and relevant training in Inclusive Education (IE). The results showed that lower levels of negative emotions were linked to higher levels of self-efficacy in collaborating with parents and professionals (Li & Cheung, 2021). According to a study conducted on 100 teachers in Ghana, those who had positive attitudes toward Inclusive Education (IE) and less anxiety about implementing it were more likely to accept and commit to its implementation. The study also revealed that the main concerns of teachers were the lack of skills to effectively teach students with disabilities and inadequate resources to accommodate the diverse abilities among students (Michailakis & Reich, 2009).

Methodology

Data were collected through a questionnaire that included measuring instruments for core values, negative sentiments, and attitudes toward IE. The questionnaire explained the purpose and significance of the study and invited participants to take part. Teachers and students have ten days to complete the online questionnaire provided to them. Anonymous participation was requested. Prospective responders were reminded via email to complete the questionnaire two weeks after it was posted online. The linked institute's Research Ethics Committee authorized this work.

The measuring instruments indicated below have been validated with an independent sample. The results of the validation research are available here. The validity and reliability of the following measures are based on psychometric qualities that have been confirmed and documented in validation studies.

Core values of IE, Negative sentiments, Attitudes towards IE

The core values measure is based on the "Equal learning opportunities for students" evaluation in this study. The scale's five questions contain comments such as "It is the human right of students to learn in regular class" and "Students regular class is a discriminatory practice." The original version of the questionnaire asked respondents to rate each Core Value on a four-point scale. To preserve consistency with previous questionnaire questions in this study, a point grading system is used (1 being very disagreed; 6 being severely disagreed). Potential ratings range from higher scores, which indicate stronger support for IE's fundamental beliefs.

The current research employs the first factor of the original scale to assess negative attitudes toward students. It comprises aspects that eliminate feelings of unease when interacting with pupils. Respondents are asked to rate each thing, such as "I feel uncomfortable and find it difficult to relax," or I make brief connections and finish them as quickly as possible.

Factor analysis research offered two scale components to assess attitudes and beliefs regarding IE. As a result, attitudes toward IE, as well as the Beliefs and Feelings subscale. Overall, ratings throughout the subscale range indicate a more positive attitude about IE.

Results and Discussion

The online poll gathered answers from 107 male teachers. A little more than assistant or associate professors. The remaining instructors possess master's degrees. A small minority of the instructors had less than 10 years of teaching experience, while the rest had ten to twenty years. 458 pupils were surveyed in response to the questionnaire. The outcomes will guide the administration of the school in making decisions in the future. After analyzing the data, the school administration will make the required adjustments in light of the findings. The questionnaire covered various aspects, such as academic programs, extracurricular activities, and facilities. The administration aims to enhance the overall educational experience based on the feedback received from the students. Additionally, they will prioritize areas that need improvement to ensure a conducive learning environment for all students.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' and Students' Test Scores

Categories	Very low	Low	high	Very high	M (SD)	Mid-point	t-value
Teachers	%	%	%	%			
Core Values	17.8	28.9	40.2	13.1	21.56 (4.92)	17.5	8.55***
Negative sentiments	74.8 -	19.6	5.6	0.0	11.12 (3.95)	17.5	-16.71***
Attitudes towards IE	17.8	14.9	25.2	42.1	31.41 (8.30)	28.0	4.25***
Belief	23.4	14.9	22.4	39.3	15.21 (4.75)	14.0	2.63*
Feeling	11.2	22.4	22.4	43.9	16.21 (4.15)	14.0	5.50***
Students	%	%	%	%			
Core Values	8.1	22.5	45.8	23.6	23.03 (4.25)	17.5	27.83***
Negative sentiments	59.4	18.3	13.6	8.7	13.49 (5.29)	17.5	-16.24***
Attitudes towards IE	8.5	13.6	25.3	52.6	33.86 (7.48)	28.0	16.76***
Belief	15.3	18.8	21.6	44.3	15.97 (4.44)	14.0	9.48***
Feeling	5.2	10.8	19.4	64.6	17.89 (3.72)	14.0	22.36***

Note. Midpoint = Conceptual midpoint. One sample t-test was used to examine difference between means scores and conceptual midpoint. *p <.05, **p <.01, ***p <.001

An examination of the raw data revealed similar findings, with the biggest amount of disagreement occurring among teachers. Almost one-fifth of the teachers (19.6%) disagreed with IE's basic principles, while 10.1% to 13.7% of students with and without special educational needs disagreed. Disagreement was defined as a score of F 3 on a 6-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 6 = strongly agree). There was a marginally significant difference in proportions between teachers and students ($Z = 1.85, p = .06$). The lowest rate of disagreement among students with SEN may represent the effect of self-interest on views.

Table 1 shows that both teachers' and students' mean ratings for negative emotions, or unpleasant feelings, were significantly lower than the conceptual midpoint, indicating that both groups of participants felt relatively at ease while interacting with others. Each category of respondents expressed positive emotions regarding IE. According to one sample t-test, teachers' and students' mean beliefs and feelings were all significantly higher than the conceptual midpoint.

Overall, teachers and students have few unfavorable thoughts about IE and many positive attitudes toward it. As a result, it is therefore true that their ideas and behaviors are the source of the children's negative social interactions. It is therefore true that their ideas and behaviors are the source of the children's negative social interactions, which could be addressed through education and intervention. Lam and Yeung (2005) observed that inclusive children did not appear to earn the trust of their classmates. Although the instructors had positive feelings about IE, they reported a poor relationship between the lecturers and the pupils. Additionally, they found that the lack of trust among classmates could be addressed through education and intervention. Furthermore, the instructors believed that promoting a supportive and inclusive classroom environment would be crucial in fostering trust among classmates. According to Lam and Yeung, embracing kids and classmates who are generally growing may be termed "positive discrimination," originating from the belief that inclusive pupils are less than deserving and require assistance. This belief may perpetuate a sense of inequality and hinder the development of a supportive learning community. However, it is important to recognize the value and potential of every individual, regardless of their background or abilities. Positive discrimination might make inclusive children feel horrible about themselves and cause them to avoid social interactions. Consequently, it would appear that attitudes are not the only thing that counts; the manner in which attitudes are expressed also matters. In order to create a truly inclusive society, we must not only strive to change attitudes but also promote respectful and empathetic behavior towards individuals of all backgrounds. This is crucial for fostering understanding and building strong relationships. It is through our actions and interactions that we can create a sense of belonging and acceptance for everyone.

Conclusion

Both teachers and students recognized the main concepts of IE. Nonetheless, 19.6% of teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the fundamental concepts. Teachers and students generally had good attitudes regarding IE, with few negative ones. Teachers' unfavorable attitudes toward people with impairments decreased. However, some pupils still had unfavorable attitudes about people with impairments. These unfavorable sentiments may have been shaped by cultural prejudices and a lack of exposure to various communities. These unfavorable sentiments may have been impacted by cultural prejudices and a lack of exposure to other communities, but education and the promotion of inclusion among all people are critical for creating a more tolerant and inclusive society. It is important to recognize the role of education and the promotion of inclusion in

combating these prejudices and fostering a more tolerant and inclusive society. Their attitudes toward IE, however, received the lowest marks. It was expected that pupils with less severe impairments would be better suited for IE than those with more severe disabilities. Regardless of the severity of the disability, mental and emotional issues, as well as intellectual difficulties, were most commonly deemed unsuitable for IE. Since mental and emotional disorders are the most prevalent forms of disability among students, this problem must be addressed in the implementation of IE. Teachers can use the reference material from this study to help them adopt IE. However, convenience sampling of private higher education schools was used to get the data. When extrapolating the results to instructors and students at publicly supported colleges, caution must be used to ensure the findings are applicable and representative. The limitations of convenience sampling may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the sample size and demographics of the participants should be considered when interpreting the results. Moreover, the potential biases in the selection process should be acknowledged. Furthermore, the ability to draw broader conclusions from the findings may be compromised.

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