



“Attitudes Of Regular School Teachers Towards Inclusion Of Students With Disabilities In Their Classroom In Mandi District, Himachal Pradesh”

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Abstract:

Education is a fundamental driver of human development, and inclusive education plays a crucial role in ensuring that all students, including those with disabilities, have equal opportunities to succeed. This study explores the attitudes of regular school teachers toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms within Mandi District, Himachal Pradesh. Utilizing a survey research design, the study administered a comprehensive questionnaire to 63 teachers, encompassing both male and female participants with varying years of experience.

The findings reveal that teachers generally hold a positive attitude towards inclusive education. However, the analysis shows no statistically significant differences in attitudes based on gender, locality, years of experience, general educational qualification, or the presence of students with disabilities in the classroom. Notably, teachers with special education training exhibited slightly more favorable attitudes, though this difference was not statistically significant.

These results underscore the importance of professional development and specialized training in fostering supportive attitudes towards inclusion. The study highlights the need for further research into other factors influencing teachers' attitudes and the barriers to effective inclusion. By addressing these areas, educators and policymakers can better support inclusive practices, ensuring that all students receive the educational opportunities they deserve.

Keywords: Attitudes, Regular School Teachers, Inclusion, Students with Disabilities, Classroom Integration, Mandi District, Himachal Pradesh

I. Introduction

Education is the cornerstone of human development, driving significant changes within individuals and societies. Through education, inclusive practices can help build a community where all students, regardless of their abilities, are given equal opportunities to succeed. The inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms has become increasingly important as a key aspect of creating a fair and equitable education system.

Inclusion goes beyond being just a policy or practice—it is a fundamental right. It ensures that every student, including those with disabilities, has access to the same educational opportunities. This approach requires schools and classrooms to adapt to the diverse needs of all children, embracing differences and fostering a learning environment where every child can thrive. According to the International League of Societies for **Mentally Handicapped (1999)**, inclusion enables individuals with disabilities to fully participate in all areas of life, from education to employment, thus integrating them into society without the need for segregation.

In India, the concept of inclusion is gaining prominence, with ongoing efforts to coordinate between government departments, parents, education systems, and professionals. This teamwork is essential for creating an inclusive environment where children with special educational needs are recognized as children first, with much in common with their peers.

The practice of inclusion, where students with special needs are educated alongside their typically developing peers, often involves a combination of regular education classes and specialized services. This model supports a comprehensive approach by providing necessary services within the regular classroom, allowing students to receive support without being separated from their classmates.

The principles of inclusive education, first introduced by **UNESCO** at the **Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education in 1994**, continue to shape the global push toward inclusivity. **UNESCO** emphasizes that inclusive education should accommodate all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions. This principle is especially relevant in diverse regions like **Mandi District in Himachal Pradesh**, where the attitudes of regular school teachers towards inclusion are crucial for the successful implementation of these practices.

Understanding and positively influencing the attitudes of regular school teachers toward the inclusion of students with disabilities is vital. With the right mindset and a dedication to inclusive practices, education can truly become a force for human development, benefiting all students and promoting a more inclusive society.

II. Review of the Related Literature

Monje (2017) studied the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of **15 middle school general education teachers** toward the inclusion of students with disabilities. The analysis identified three perspectives: Believers, Non-Believers, and True Believers. Both Believers and True Believers supported full inclusion, with Believers expressing a need for more professional development on inclusive practices. Non-Believers, however, did not support full inclusion for all students with disabilities. The study suggests that additional professional development is essential to better prepare general education teachers to support students with disabilities.

Bhatnagar and Das (2013) surveyed **500 secondary school teachers in Delhi** and found that while teachers generally held positive attitudes towards inclusive education, they were more receptive to students with mild to moderate disabilities than those with behavioral or physical impairments. Factors like higher education, special education training, experience with disabilities, and gender influenced these attitudes. The study emphasized the importance of professional development and in-service training to improve teachers' effectiveness in inclusive classrooms.

Astha, Sharma, and Bhargava (2011) conducted a study to assess the attitudes of **in-service primary school teachers in Kurukshetra, Haryana**, towards inclusion. They surveyed **108 teachers** using a questionnaire and found that the teachers generally had a positive attitude towards including children with special needs alongside their peers in regular classrooms. This positive attitude is seen as beneficial for the effective implementation of inclusion at the primary level, potentially enhancing both academic and overall performance for all students, especially those with special needs.

Bradshaw, Lori, and Mundia (2006) studied the attitudes and concerns about inclusive education among **166 teachers in Brunei**, comparing **in-service teachers with inclusive education training, pre-service teachers with one course, and those without any training**. They found that training in inclusive education significantly improved teachers' attitudes towards students with disabilities, though concern levels were similar across groups. The study emphasized the importance of teacher training in fostering positive attitudes and recommended that education programs equip graduates with the skills needed for effective inclusion.

III. Rationale of the Study

The successful implementation of inclusive education largely depends on the attitudes of regular school teachers toward students with disabilities. Research has shown that teachers' attitudes can either facilitate or hinder the inclusion of these students in mainstream classrooms. **Monje (2017)** highlighted the varying perspectives among teachers, with some fully supporting inclusion and others expressing reservations. The study underscored the need for professional development to address these differences and better equip teachers for inclusive practices.

Similarly, **Bhatnagar and Das (2013)** found that while many teachers in Delhi held positive attitudes toward inclusive education, their acceptance varied depending on the type of disability, with those having behavioral or physical impairments receiving less support. This suggests that specific training and experience in special education can positively influence teachers' attitudes, making them more effective in inclusive settings. **Astha, Sharma, and Bhargava (2011)** also observed that primary school teachers in Kurukshetra generally supported inclusion, which contributed to better outcomes for all students, particularly those with special needs.

Bradshaw, Lori, and Mundia (2006) further emphasized that training in inclusive education is crucial for developing positive attitudes among teachers. Their study revealed that such training significantly improves teachers' willingness to include students with disabilities, highlighting the importance of equipping educators with the necessary skills and knowledge.

Given this background, it is essential to study the attitudes of regular school teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in their classrooms. Understanding these attitudes can help identify barriers to successful inclusion and inform strategies to enhance teacher training and support. By addressing these challenges, we can ensure that all students, regardless of their abilities, receive the education and opportunities they deserve.

IV. Statement of the Problem

“Attitudes of Regular School Teachers towards Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in their Classroom in Mandi District, Himachal Pradesh”

V. Research Questions

- i. What are the attitudes of regular school teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities?
- ii. How do the attitudes of male and female regular school teachers compare regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities?
- iii. How do the attitudes of regular school teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities differ between rural and urban areas?
- iv. How do the attitudes of regular school teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities vary based on their years of teaching experience?
- v. How do the attitudes of regular school teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities differ according to their educational qualifications?
- vi. How do the attitudes of regular school teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities vary based on their special educational qualifications or training?
- vii. How do regular school teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities relate to the presence of students with disabilities in their classrooms?

VI. Objectives of the Study

- i. To investigate the attitudes of regular school teachers towards including students with disabilities in their classrooms.
- ii. To analyze and compare the attitudes of male and female regular school teachers regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities.
- iii. To compare the attitudes of regular school teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in rural versus urban settings.
- iv. To examine how the attitudes of regular school teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities differ based on their teaching experience.
- v. To evaluate the impact of educational qualifications on the attitudes of regular school teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities.
- vi. To assess how special educational qualifications or training influence the attitudes of regular school teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities.
- vii. To explore how the presence of students with disabilities in the classroom affects the attitudes of regular school teachers towards inclusion.

VII. Hypothesis of the Study

- i. There is no significant difference between of the male and female regular school teacher's attitudes towards inclusion of student with disability.
- ii. There is no significant difference between of the rural and urban regular school teacher's attitudes towards inclusion of student with disability.
- iii. There is no significant difference in the attitudes of the regular school teachers with reference to their experience.
- iv. There is no significant difference in the attitudes of the regular school teachers with reference to their general educational qualification.
- v. There is no significant difference in the attitudes of the regular school teachers with reference to the qualification/training in special education.
- vi. There is no significant difference in the attitudes of the regular school teachers with reference to students with disability in the classroom

VIII. Methodology of the Study

- i. **Research Design:** In this study the researcher used a **survey research design** to examine the attitudes of regular school teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities. A questionnaire was developed and administered to **teachers working in regular schools across Mandi District, Himachal Pradesh**, to gather insights on their perspectives regarding inclusive education in their classrooms.

- ii. **Population:** In this study population comprised of teachers working in regular schools across **Mandi District, Himachal Pradesh.**
- iii. **Sample Size:** The sample for the study was drawn from various regular schools in **Mandi District, Himachal Pradesh,** and consisted of **63 regular school teachers.** The participants, who had between **1 and 26 years of experience, included 38 male and 25 female teachers.**
- iv. **Sampling Techniques:** In this study the researcher used **random sampling technique.**
- v. **Tools and Techniques:** A **simple, comprehensive questionnaire** was created to assess the attitudes of regular school teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in their classrooms.

The final survey scale comprised **26 items,** with teachers responding to statements about inclusive education using a **four-point rating scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree.** Of the **26 items, 14 were positive** statements and **12 were negative** statements.

- vi. **Statistical Analysis Technique:** The researcher sought guidance from statistical experts to ensure the use of appropriate methods. Based on their advice, suitable statistical techniques were employed. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (**SPSS**) software. The study's statistical analysis included calculating the **Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), Percentage,** as well as performing **T-tests and ANOVA tests.**

IX. Results

The results of the present study have been presented in tabulated form –

Table 1: Comparison of Attitudes Towards Inclusion by Gender

Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	df	Sig
Male	38	70.42	8.59	0.786	61	0.435
Female	25	68.76	7.57			

The mean attitude score towards inclusion was higher for male teachers (**70.42**) compared to female teachers (**68.76**). However, the **t-test result (0.786)** was not statistically significant (**p = 0.435**), indicating no significant difference in attitudes based on gender.

Table 2: Comparison of Attitudes Towards Inclusion by Locality

Locality	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	df	Sig
Rural	50	70.26	8.49	0.947	61	0.348
Urban	13	67.85	6.80			

Teachers from rural areas had a higher mean attitude score (**70.26**) compared to those from urban areas (**67.85**). The t-test result (**0.947**) was not statistically significant (**p = 0.348**), suggesting no significant difference in attitudes based on locality.

Table 3: Comparison of Attitudes Towards Inclusion by Experience

Experience	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	df	Sig
Below 5 Years	10	69.90	7.65	0.058	61	0.954
Above 5 Years	53	69.74	8.35			

Teachers with less than **5 years** of experience had a slightly higher mean attitude score (**69.90**) compared to those with more than **5 years** of experience (**69.74**). The t-test result (**0.058**) was not statistically significant (**p = 0.954**), indicating no significant difference in attitudes based on experience.

Table 4: Comparison of Attitudes Towards Inclusion by General Educational Qualification

Experience	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	F-value	df	Sig
UG	9	74.67	9.57	2.056	60	0.136
Graduate	18	69.67	8.25			
PG	36	68.58	7.55			

Undergraduate teachers had a higher mean attitude score (**74.67**) compared to graduate (**69.67**) and postgraduate teachers (**68.58**). However, the ANOVA result (**2.056**) was not statistically significant (**p = 0.136**), indicating no significant difference in attitudes based on general educational qualification.

Table 5: Comparison of Attitudes Towards Inclusion by Special Education Training

Training	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	df	Sig
Trained	26	71.35	8.99	1.295	61	0.200
Untrained	37	68.65	7.49			

Teachers who had received special education training had a higher mean attitude score (**71.35**) compared to those who had not (**68.65**). The t-test result (**1.295**) was not statistically significant (**p = 0.200**), indicating no significant difference in attitudes based on special education training.

Table 7: Comparison of Attitudes Towards Inclusion by Presence of Students with Disabilities in Classroom

Students with Disabilities	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	df	Sig
Yes	37	69.41	8.25	0.410	61	0.683
No	26	70.27	8.22			

Teachers with students with disabilities in their classrooms had a slightly lower mean attitude score (**69.41**) compared to those without (**70.27**). The t-test result (**0.410**) was not statistically significant (**p = 0.683**), indicating no significant difference in attitudes based on the presence of students with disabilities in the classroom.

X. Discussion

The successful implementation of inclusive education hinges significantly on the attitudes of regular school teachers towards students with disabilities. This study explored various factors influencing these attitudes and compared them across different demographic and professional backgrounds.

Gender and Locality

The analysis revealed no significant difference in attitudes based on gender (Table 1) or locality (Table 2). Male teachers had a slightly higher mean attitude score compared to female teachers, and rural teachers had a higher mean score compared to urban teachers. However, these differences were not statistically significant. This suggests that while there may be variations in individual attitudes, they do not significantly influence the overall effectiveness of inclusive education practices based on gender or locality.

Experience and Educational Qualification

The study also found no significant differences in attitudes based on years of experience (Table 3) or general educational qualifications (Table 4). Teachers with less than 5 years of experience had a slightly higher attitude score compared to those with more than 5 years of experience, and undergraduate teachers had a higher mean score compared to graduates and postgraduates. Despite these observations, the differences were not statistically significant. This indicates that factors such as teaching experience and general educational background do not have a substantial impact on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion.

Special Education Training

Training in special education did show a difference in attitudes, with trained teachers exhibiting a higher mean attitude score compared to untrained teachers (Table 5). Although this difference was not statistically significant, it aligns with previous research emphasizing the importance of specialized training. This finding supports the view that professional development in special education is crucial for fostering positive attitudes among teachers.

Presence of Students with Disabilities

Finally, the study found no significant difference in attitudes based on the presence of students with disabilities in the classroom (Table 7). Teachers with students with disabilities had a slightly lower mean attitude score compared to those without such students, but the difference was not statistically significant. This suggests that the direct experience of having students with disabilities does not significantly alter teachers' attitudes towards inclusion.

Literature Support

The findings of this study are supported by several pieces of literature:

- **Monje (2017)** identified varying perspectives on inclusion among teachers and highlighted the need for professional development, which aligns with the finding that training influences attitudes, although not always significantly.
- **Bhatnagar and Das (2013)** found that teachers' attitudes towards different types of disabilities vary and emphasized the role of professional development. This supports the observed importance of specialized training.
- **Astha, Sharma, and Bhargava (2011)** observed generally positive attitudes towards inclusion among primary teachers, which is consistent with the overall positive attitudes found in this study.
- **Bradshaw, Lori, and Mundia (2006)** highlighted the impact of training on improving teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education, aligning with the finding that special education training can enhance attitudes, albeit not always significantly.

XI. Conclusion and Researcher's Views

The results of this study underline the complexity of factors influencing teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. While demographic factors such as gender and locality did not significantly impact attitudes, specialized training in inclusive education emerged as a critical factor. This suggests that targeted professional development could be more effective in shaping positive attitudes and improving the implementation of inclusive practices.

Future research should focus on exploring the depth of special education training and its direct impact on teaching practices. Additionally, qualitative studies might provide more nuanced insights into how different types of training and professional experiences shape teachers' attitudes and practices regarding inclusive education.

XII. Suggestions for Further Study

- i. The present study seems to have made an attempt to study the attitude of regular school teachers towards the inclusion of students with disability in their classroom.
- ii. Further studies can be conducted by taking large sample from different districts of state.
- iii. Further studies can be conducted to find the other factors which influence the teacher's attitude towards inclusion of students with disability.
- iv. Further studies can be conducted on comparison of Teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with different- different disability.
- v. Further studies can be conducted to find the other barriers of enhancing inclusion of students with disability in Himachal Pradesh
- vi. Comparative studies can be conducted in rural and urban area.
- vii. Comparative studies can be conducted in private and government teachers.

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