

## Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Education

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### Abstract

Inclusion involves the provision of a structured environment for students with special needs in general education classroom settings. Teachers are the fundamental pillar for the successful implementation of inclusive education. The study aimed to identify the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. It was hypothesized that teachers' attitude towards inclusive education varies with their demographic characteristics (education, teaching experiences, teaching level). A survey was conducted and purposive sampling technique was used to obtain data of 100 teachers from different general education teachers, special education teachers, and inclusive education teachers. Multidimensional attitude towards inclusive education scale (MATIES; Mahat, 2008) was used as a survey tool. This is a Likert-type scale that has three subscales namely, cognitive, affective, and behavioral. The reliability of the scale for the present study is ( $\alpha = .874$ ). One way ANOVA was conducted to obtain the difference in the attitude of teachers with their demographic variables. A significant difference was found in the teachers' attitudes following their experience. A significant difference was found in the attitude of teachers teaching to high school students. Teachers of inclusive education were having a more positive attitude than other teachers.

**Keywords:** inclusive education, special education, students with disabilities, special education training

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## **Introduction**

Inclusive education (IE) is a growing concept in Pakistan (Mullick, Ahmmed, & Sharma, 2014). Inclusion involves modification of the formal educational institutions in a way that they might deal and respond to the various needs of all children through increasing learning participation and reducing elimination from the mainstream education (Malik, 2011). Inclusion involves the provision of structural settings to students with special needs in the general classroom with the help of special education teachers in accordance with the individual education program of every student (O’Gorman & Drudy, 2010). Graziano and Navarre (2012) stated that students with special needs learn more effectively when they are provided with the opportunity to learn along with their healthy peers in the general education classroom.

Providing inclusive education has been evidenced as a great challenge as many countries have failed to provide inclusive education in their schools (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education [EADSNE], 2012a). Guerrero, (2019) reported that inclusive education required extra changes in the management and infrastructure of the institution. Teachers play a vital role in ensuring effective learning experiences for children with special needs (Farooq, 2012). EADSNE, (2012b) reported that the success of inclusive education is based on teachers’ attitude towards inclusive education. A more positive attitude of teachers towards students with special needs leads to a more successful implementation of inclusive education. Taylor and Ringlaben (2012) emphasized the damaging effects of negativity in attitudes toward inclusive education as these attitudes were likely to prevail throughout the school environment and resulted in obstructive teaching practices. Other variables that affect inclusive education are the training of teachers in special education, their experience with students with special needs, and their amount of being in contact with challenged people.

The teaching experience is associated with more positive attitudes towards inclusion (Boyle, Topping, & Jindal-Snape, 2013). Hwang and Evans (2011) found that teachers of young age with less experience had a more positive attitude toward inclusive

education than older and more experienced teachers. Crispel and Karsperski (2019) found that the high educational status and high quality of training in special education resulted in more positivity in the attitude of teachers towards inclusion. Hwang and Evans (2011) reported a negative association between teachers' attitude and their respective years of teaching experience, as more experienced were having more negative attitudes.

Woodcock, (2013) compared attitudes of teachers experienced in special education with the attitudes of non-experienced teachers and did not find any difference in the attitude of both teachers. In a qualitative study, teachers described feelings of guilt and frustration of not spending appropriate time with regular students because they had to spend extra time with students with special needs (Ahsan, Deppeler & Sharma, 2013). Sadioglu, Bilgin, Batu, and Oksal (2013) established that elementary teachers usually have a negative attitude towards inclusive education. Sadioglu et al. revealed inappropriate instructions from regular classroom teachers to students with disabilities due to a lack of training and facilities available to teachers. Einat and Sharon (2015) found that elementary school teachers showed frustration due to a lack of preparation to deal with students with special needs in regular classroom settings. Teachers indicated that they were not well prepared and there were fewer training facilities to prepare them for inclusion. Yada and Savolainen (2017) presented teachers' concerns (lack of facilities, lack of training, etc.) regarding inclusive education that brought negativity in teachers' attitude towards inclusive education. The overall success of an inclusion model depends upon Teachers' attitudes. Gal, Schreur, and Engel-Yeger (2012) identified that negativity towards inclusion is more likely to cause a reduction in academic performance and an increase in the isolation of special needs students. Gal et al. specified that teachers with a negative attitude are the hardest obstacles to bring change in the educational environment. Perhaps the collaboration between teachers and the provision of support from school administration can improve teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. Salovita (2019) found that teachers' positive attitude towards inclusive education was highly associated with the supportive environment provided by schools and their professional capabilities.

According to Murdaca, Oliva, and Costa (2018), inclusion involved a large number of variations in the pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment techniques. Although effective collaboration between teachers, schools, and many other factors, is necessary for the successful implementation of inclusive education, it mainly depends on the teachers' attitude and educational status. In Pakistan, segregated education is more popular than inclusive education. However, the idea of inclusive education is also gaining conquests to some extent. Thakur and Abbas, (2017) concluded that "Real challenge of inclusive education is to promote an inclusive ideology which could change public perception about inclusive education to create an inclusive society. Among many important challenges, parents and teachers' negative attitude are main challenges because they both are important stakeholders of the education system". So, their attitude requires to be changed if we want to make the inclusion model successful. Thus, it is important to identify teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education to remove obstacles in the implementation of inclusive education.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study was to identify teachers' attitudes as one of the major obstacles in implementing inclusive education. It was assumed that teachers' attitude towards inclusive education varies with their certain demographic characteristics e.g. education, teaching experiences, gender, teaching level, student categories such as regular students or students with special needs.

### **Hypothesis**

The hypothesis of the study is

- Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education likely to vary with their demographic characteristics (education, teaching experiences, teaching level).

## **Method**

### **Participants and Research Design**

A sample of 100 teachers from different institutions in Lahore was selected through the purposive sampling technique to collect the data of the present study. Teachers from regular schools, special education schools, and inclusive education schools of Lahore (both private and public) were recruited as a sample. Sample distribution was not equal regarding gender (Male, n=6; female, n=94). The sample was also not equally distributed regarding school type (regular schoolteachers, n=36; special education schoolteachers, n=53; inclusive education schoolteachers, n=11). Most of them were holding an M.A degree while a few were also with B.A degree. Most of the teachers were teaching to elementary grade students. Many of the teachers never had attended any special education course. Their teaching experience also varied from 2-10 years for regular students and 0-10 years for special needs students. Teachers of elementary, middle, and high school were included in the study.

### **Instrument**

Multidimensional attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education Scale (MATIES; Mahat, 2008) was used as a survey tool. Multidimensional attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education scale (MATIES) is a self-administered scale with good psychometric properties (Mahat, 2008). This is a Likert-type scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree) that has three subscales namely, cognitive, affective, and behavioral. This scale measures teachers' attitude, within the realm of inclusive education that includes physical, curricular, and social inclusion of special needs students with regular students. The internal consistency was measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficient which showed good internal consistency for the whole scale ( $\alpha = .874$ ). A section covering demographic information was also included along with the scale. Demographic information included gender, teaching

experience, qualification, type of teaching institute, special education courses attended by the teachers.

## **Procedure**

For data collection researcher contacted school administrations and explained the purpose of the research. Teachers' contact details were obtained from school administrations. Teachers were not asked for the physical meeting because of Covid- 19 and all research was conducted through email. After taking telephonic consent from teachers, an email containing an informed consent link embedded to the survey instrument in the monkey survey was sent to teachers. Once teachers clicked the link to start the survey their consent was obtained. After completion and submission of the survey form by the participants, the form was returned to the monkey survey account created by the researcher for response collection.

## **Data Analysis**

After getting all responses in the monkey survey account the whole data was transferred to SPSS version 25 for statistical analysis. Groups of participants were formulated according to their demographic variables. Along with the demographic descriptive analysis, one-way ANOVA was also conducted among a demographic group for obtaining differences. Negative items of MATIES were reversed on SPSS to obtain an overall positive attitude of teachers towards inclusive education. Differences and similarities of survey items were also examined for cognitive, affective, and behavior domains of MATIES.

## **Results**

Attitudes of teachers were measured concerning different demographic variables. A detailed analysis of the responses of participants is presented below. Comparison of attitudes of teachers according to their qualification is shown in table1.

Table 1

*ANOVA results and descriptive statistics for teachers' attitudes towards inclusion by their qualifications*

Attitude Dimension	Bachelor's		Masters		MPhil/PhD		ANOVA	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i> (2, 97)	<i>p</i>
Cognitive	21.62	2.91	23.46	3.45	21.53	5.91	2.16	.121
Affective	22.46	6.01	25.24	5.54	22.16	6.71	3.01	.054
Behavioral	27.85	4.08	29.17	3.59	25.62	4.75	7.94	.001
Total	71.92	9.02	77.88	9.49	69.31	15.7	5.24	.007

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Results of Table 1 show, no significant difference in cognitive and affective aspects of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. Whereas, a significant difference was found in the behavioral aspect ( $F=7.94$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and the overall attitude of teachers towards inclusion ( $F=5.24$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Teachers holding master's degrees showed a significantly better response for behavioral dimension and overall attitudes towards inclusion.

Table 2

*ANOVA results and descriptive statistics for teachers' attitudes towards inclusion by the grade they taught*

Attitude Dimension	Elementary		Middle		High		ANOVA	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i> (2, 97)	<i>p</i>
Cognitive	22.16	4.84	21.23	1.87	24.11	5.03	1.81	.170
Affective	23.47	5.76	22.15	6.34	25.00	7.75	0.84	.435
Behavioral	26.56	4.35	28.46	3.51	30.26	4.33	6.02	.003
Total	72.19	12.84	71.85	9.21	79.37	14.74	2.45	.092

Table 2 shows a significant difference in behavioral dimensions of attitudes of teachers ( $F = 6.02$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) according to their teaching to different grade levels. The result of the post hoc test shows significantly positive attitudes of teachers teaching to high classes ( $M = 30.26$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). No significant difference was found in cognitive, affective dimensions of attitude. The overall attitude of teachers also did not show a specific difference concerning their qualifications.

Table 3

*ANOVA results and descriptive statistics for teachers' attitude by the type of school*

Attitude	Teaching in Regular Schools		Teaching in Special Education Schools		Teaching in Inclusive Schools		ANOVA	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Dimension							(2,97)	
Cognitive	19.92	4.16	23.34	23.34	26.09	5.42	11.75	.000
Affective	19.61	5.99	25.53	25.53	27.27	5.69	15.17	.000
Behavioral	25.2	4.84	28.66	28.66	29.27	3.26	8.16	.001
Total	64.81	12.93	77.53	77.53	82.64	10.91	17.77	.000

In table 3 one-way ANOVA suggests that teachers' attitude towards inclusion was different according to the type of school they were teaching in ( $p < 0.01$ ). Turkey's post hoc test showed better attitudes for a group of teachers teaching in the school for students with special needs ( $M = 77.53$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) than for teachers' teaching to regular students ( $M = 64.81$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Teachers in inclusive settings showed a more positive attitude than other groups of teachers ( $M = 82.64$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) in all dimensions of attitudes towards inclusive education.

Table 4

*ANOVA results and descriptive statistics for teachers' attitudes by special education courses attended*

Attitude	None		2 or less		3 or more		ANOVA	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i> (2, 97)	<i>p</i>
Dimension								
Cognitive	21.24	5.12	22.75	2.38	23.19	4.39	4.55	.005
Affective	21.07	6.34	24.50	5.73	25.62	5.25	5.78	.001
Behavioral	25.33	4.04	28.50	3.85	29.22	4.15	8.12	.000
Total	67.64	13.36	75.75	9.82	78.03	10.72	8.41	.000

Table 4 shows that one-way ANOVA yielded a significant difference in all aspects of teachers' attitudes according to their training in special education. Further turkey posts hoc test shows that the group which attended 3 or more special education courses

was having a more positive attitude from other groups ( $M = 78.03$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

Table 5

*ANOVA results and descriptive statistics for teachers' attitude by their teaching experience with regular students*

Attitude	Less than 2 Yrs.		2-5 yrs.		5-10 Yrs.		More than 10 Yrs.		ANOVA	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Dimension									(2,97)	
Cognitive	22.44	3.32	21.42	4.76	23.09	3.78	24.15	5.33	1.88	.137
Affective	24.11	4.67	23.24	6.35	22.19	7.48	25.70	4.82	1.19	.316
Behavioral	30.22	4.84	26.42	4.14	27.42	5.13	29.10	3.55	3.15	.029
Total	76.77	9.94	71.08	13.47	72.72	13.74	78.95	11.06	2.02	.116

Results of Table 5 shows that the behavioral dimension of attitude was significantly different according to the experience of teaching in regular students ( $F = 3.15$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The attitude of teachers with less than 2 years of teaching experience was significantly better ( $M = 30.22$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) than other categories (See Table 5).

Table 6

*ANOVA results and descriptive statistics for teachers' attitude by their teaching experience of students with special needs*

Attitude	None		Less than 1 yrs.		1-4 yrs.		5-10 yrs.		ANOVA	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Dimension									(2, 97)	
Cognitive	19.63	4.39	24.14	4.42	24.07	4.32	23.32	4.15	6.77	.000
Affective	19.47	5.73	21.43	6.97	26.79	5.17	25.28	5.18	10.69	.000
Behavioral	24.62	4.33	28.57	4.89	29.48	3.57	28.37	3.92	8.44	.000
Total	63.72	11.93	74.14	15.34	80.34	9.98	76.97	10.41	12.85	.000

Table 6 shows a significant difference in all dimensions of teachers' attitudes according to their teaching experience of

students with special needs that is  $F= 12.85, p<0.01$ . Post hoc test shows that a group of teachers with 1 - 4 years of teaching experience had a more positive attitude ( $M = 80.34, p<0.05$ ) than other groups.

## Discussion

A quantitative survey was conducted to find out the teachers' attitude towards inclusive education according to demographic characteristics of the sample e.g. qualification of teachers, grade level they taught, teaching experience of students with special needs, teaching experience with regular students, types of students being taught, their special education training and gender. It was found that the difference between the qualification of teachers and their attitude towards inclusive education was significant. Although qualification showed a difference for the behavioral dimension of attitude the effect size is small. Further, no significant difference was found between cognitive and affective dimensions. Change in behavior shows the willingness of teachers to modify the curriculum to meet the special needs of students which would gradually bring change in cognitive and affective attitudes of teachers as well. This result is not consistent with the research of Noreen, Intizar, and Gulzar (2019), who found differences in cognitive and affective dimensions of attitudes due to qualification. The difference in the results can be due to the difference in the sample of their studies. The sample of the study of Noreen et al. included only those teachers who were teaching at inclusive schools.

Results of the present study showed a significant difference according to grade levels. The difference is significant among those teachers who were teaching at elementary and high-grade level, but attitudes were less positive among elementary school teachers than teachers teaching to higher grades. This finding is consistent with the results of Gaines, Barn, and Boylan (2017) who found the least positivity in the attitudes of teachers teaching to elementary grades. Findings of the present study showed that teachers who attended more training courses in special education

had significantly better attitudes than those who did not attend any training course. The difference is evident in all three dimensions (cognitive, affective, and behavioral) of attitudes. The findings of Barnes and Gaines (2015) support the result of the present study. They highlighted the need for special training to improve teachers' behavior towards inclusive education.

The findings of this study showed a significant difference regarding schools. It was concluded that teachers teaching in inclusive schools scored high on three dimensions of attitudes (cognitive, affective, and behavioral) which is consistent with the finding of Salovita, (2019) who found a significant difference among teachers teaching in different types of school settings. He concluded that teachers teaching special education schools had a more positive attitude towards inclusion than teachers working in regular schools.

It was found that teaching experience of 2-5 years and 5-10 years with regular students is significant for the behavioral dimension of attitude with teaching experience of 2-5 years being less positive. This finding is consistent with that of Gaines, Barn, and Boylan (2017) who reported a significant positive attitude in more experienced teachers. Results of the study showed a significant difference in the behavior of teachers according to their experience of students with special needs which is consistent with the findings of Pearce, Gray, and Campbell-Evans, (2010) who reported that more experienced teachers had a more positive attitude towards inclusive education. There were no significant gender differences in attitudes of teachers in the present study and that is accounted for the unequal distribution of the sample regarding gender. Male participation was very limited in comparison to female teachers. Though previous research of Salovita, (2020) did not find any difference in attitudes of teachers regarding their gender.

## **Conclusions**

Conclusively, inclusive education can only be implemented in Pakistan by improving teachers' attitudes. It is imperative to provide teachers training to all teachers who are teaching either in regular schools, in special schools, or inclusive schools. Moreover, teachers' concerns regarding inclusive education should also be addressed to lessen obstacles to the implementation of inclusive education.

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