

## Level of Support for Disability as Diversity in Special Education Institutions

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### Abstract

Teaching students with special needs require certain type of support during education. Majority of the special education institution in Pakistan cater more than one disability which requires multifaceted type of support to manage the diverse educational needs. This paper describes the level of support in special education institutions for children with disabilities. The research design is quantitative by nature. The population comprised of special education teachers. The sample consisted of 151 teachers, selected conveniently, working in special education institutes of 16 districts taken from 5 divisions of Punjab province. A survey questionnaire consisting of 25 items based on index of inclusion was used to collect data. Percentage scale was used for responses. The instrument was validated by experts and peers and pilot tested for reliability. Components of support were rank ordered using average mean scores of each component. One sample t test was conducted to compare the level of support of each component with 50% criterion value. Independent sample t-test and analysis of variance were also administered to compare different groups of respondents. It was found that coordination among all support services was the better than the set criterion. Co-ordination among support was the most lacking component.

**Keywords:** level of support, disability, diversity, special education institutions

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## **Introduction**

Disability implies the absence of capacity to perform any activity in a way that is thought to be usual (National Policy for Special Education Pakistan, 2002). People with disabilities are considered as marginalized section of population in Pakistan as they are hidden, unheard and uncared to the maximum extent having little access towards a normal life (UNICEF, 2008; Agarwal & Steele, 2016).

The term diversity is used to refer age, gender, way of life, cultural backgrounds and religion, etc. It also represents an individual's natural pattern of learning, their abilities and inabilities (Molloy, Knight, & Woodfield, 2003). By fostering a culture of diversity everyone would be able to understand and value individual differences. Self-awareness and knowledge of our surrounding may be increased by embracing disability as diversity. This concept demands to accept, respect and celebrate disability as other forms of diversity (Anis, 2005; 2006).

Accepting disability as a normal part of human diversity requires making educational organizations, standards and policies inclusive for persons with disabilities for assurance of their rights. However, keeping in mind the end goal to succeed, recorded misperceptions and fears about disability must be challenged, and there is need to promote a culture in which diversity is worthy as mankind's most valuable resource (Aquino, 2016; Nguyen, 2018; Thrupp, 2018).

Article 30 of the United Nations Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities (PWD) articulates that PWD have equal rights regarding their cultural and linguistic individuality.

The notion of including diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that everyone is unique and recognizing our individual differences. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual (p22).

For the acceptance of human diversity there is needed to establish barrier free institutions, environment and society without

any discrimination and a fair right of equality. There should a tendency to go ancient time's misconceptions and fears that have traditionally resulted in such extreme social exclusion(Haegele & Hodge, 2016). Disability as a human diversity, included like other form of diversity. The road that leads to achieve the goal of healthy contribution in society by disabled population is required passion, determination and hard work is and developing countries have just started crawling on this road (Afflerbach & Garabagiu, 2006)

The most marginalized communities and vulnerable population in the world are girls, women, persons with disabilities and religious minorities who are facing discrimination, extreme level of violence and some other undefeatable barriers which are cause of their exclusion from community life(Cole, 2017).

After the ratification of UNCRPD in 2006 by different countries, it has been observed and realized that exclusion and marginalization of persons with disabilities is impacting the society as a whole and development of a fair and just society will not be possible if 15% of world population is deprived of the social and economical inclusion and full participation. To achieve this, extensive changes are still required in institutions, policies and social and cultural practices(Ainscow,2005; 2016; UN repot on UNCRPD,2008).

For the development of person with disabilities, it is necessary to up lift them from poverty. The approach to development for person with disabilities recognized by international community is their inclusion in Sustainable Development Goals. For poverty eradication in disabled population there is need to address the root causes such as eliminates discrimination, stigmatization and barrier free environment. There is need to address the barriers which limit the opportunities of health, education, mobility and communication for persons with disability. Persons with disability more specifically women with disability are the most effected ones by such barriers(Esping-Andersen, Gallie, Hemerijck, & Myles, 2002; Kim & Aquino, 2017).

“Diversity is the one true thing we all have in common. Celebrate it every day.” In the class context including Disability as Diversity may demand the accessibility of persons with disability by all means. Classes should be physically accessible as well as the

curriculum and instruction. For this purpose teachers have to address their inability incorporating with disable population (Shaddock, MacDonald, Hook, Giorcelli, & Arthur-Kelly, 2009). Inclusive education is an emerging trend. For developing countries it's a big challenge to accommodate diversity (Ainscow, 2005; 2016). As Pakistan is also a developing country and unable to attain SDG's. Including disability diversity in schools will be helpful to achieve the SDG 4 i.e. equitable education for all.

For equitable condition of inclusive society in which persons' rights are guaranteed meeting their academic needs is an element of growth. According the *United Nations Charter on the Rights of the Child*, having the opportunity of right to education and growth is for all. Failure in provision of education and healthy environment for individual growth is considered as a denial of rights. That's why Individual Educational Plan in United States is considered as a right based approach.

The 'dilemma of difference' is the key to the discussion in special and inclusive education. Warnock keep up that re-conceptualizing disability and exceptional needs through the ability approach makes achievable defeat of the pressure at the center of the dilemma of difference, while in the meantime writing the discussion inside a moral, normative framework in view of equity and equality (Terzi, 2005).

Including Diversity is characteristically significant. A nation becomes stronger when people of different backgrounds, different school of thoughts and experience work together; as inclusion and diversity raise innovation. Diverse groups are always remaining outperformer groups as compare to homogeneous groups. Diversity can enrich the learning process in an educational setting. Enabling students empower their diverse peers. Both gain different experience by each other which prepare them to participate in a diverse society. Integrated class room environments play a significant role to enable students to be skillful in collaboration and communication while dealing in multi-cultural backgrounds (Olkin, 2002; Zanoni, 2010; May, 2012)

Diversity enhances the growth of citizenship in learners. In such collaborative environment they learn humanity avoid unkind actions. Although research on classroom diversity already exists

not a new reform, but new researches and experiences uplift its value and benefits and found links in quality and diversity. However, it may be difficult to deal with diverse population of learners, but it is not justified as a cause of failure (Rao & Skouge, 2015).

The prominent feature of OECD countries' policy is "equity". At the focal point of said challenge lies the objective of inclusion, driving eventually to enhance social cohesion. The expectations from education systems here are to play their role in such development. For this purpose education ministers demands OECD to enhance education & training systems to including diversity to achieve the target of equity (Simon, Małgorzata, & Beatriz, 2007).

There are two fundamental disagreements regarding inclusive education, the one a "rights-based" origination of value infers that everywhere conceivable, special needs students should educate in general school, standard schools as opposed to in particular organizations; and the other different national ways to deal with incorporating students with handicaps in special schools give helpful exercises to the more extensive discussions about instructive assorted variety and value. In the fundamental, these advancements are "foundational" enough in their own entitlement to be generalized different students, e.g. those in danger from burdened foundations, and the individuals who might profit by more individualized instructing and learning (Olkin, 2002; Ainscow, 2005; 2006).

Cornell tries to create a culture of incorporation and regard for individuals' growth and to be where individuals can flourish in a culture of incorporation and regard. Maintaining a comprehensive college requires a guarantee to instruct ourselves about the assorted variety of our locale. With learning about how our different characters including inability, race, sex, sexual introduction, financial status, religion, ethnicity and more can shape the chances and encounters that we managed, it is important to play a functioning part in building a comprehensive network.

The Diversity incorporates Disability movement is intended to teach about the disability understanding. Through this instructive exertion, we enterprise to upgrade our insight into the inability encounter, to construct a network of disabled persons, build up a culture in which people are enabled to stand up, and propel our

grounds toward more prominent availability for all. The broadly confirmed United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) of 2006, these and other worldwide work gauges set the worldwide regularizing structure for inability incorporation in the realm of work. This worldwide force for incapacity consideration is likewise reflected in the numerous handicap references all through the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), settled upon by all UN Member States. The SDGs speak to an uncommon open door for organizations to adjust their strategies and practices to these worldwide focuses for 2030, including the accomplishment of not too bad work for all people with disabilities (UNESCO, 2018).

Such worldwide responsibilities strengthen the difference in observations and desires towards individuals with incapacities held by organizations, individuals with disabilities themselves and additionally their families and companions, and society on the loose. Like never previously, organizations are relied upon to add to positive social change and more comprehensive social orders.

There is no ‘diversity’ without disability. Look, there’s just no ‘diversity’ without people with a disability being included in the mix. Every company, every organization, and every corporate image has some sort of diversity and inclusion policy and practice these days, but people with a disability come under the ‘corporate social responsibility’ label.

## **Significance**

For developing countries it’s a big challenge to accommodate diversity. As Pakistan is also a developing country and unable to attain SDG’s. Including disability as diversity in schools will be helpful to achieve the SDG 4, equitable education for all. So, it is obvious to conduct such study which revealed wide range of parameters pertaining to significance of including disability as diversity. This study would be helpful to make the better perception of teacher as well as society about the need of education for their children with disability.

This study would provide a deep insight about the level of support for disability as diversity provided by special educational institutions

and which area is needed to be focused. It would be beneficial for policy makers to identify the need of including disability as diversity. It would help to improve the educational structure for children with special needs in public schools. It would explore the existing barriers for school going children with special needs.

## **Objectives**

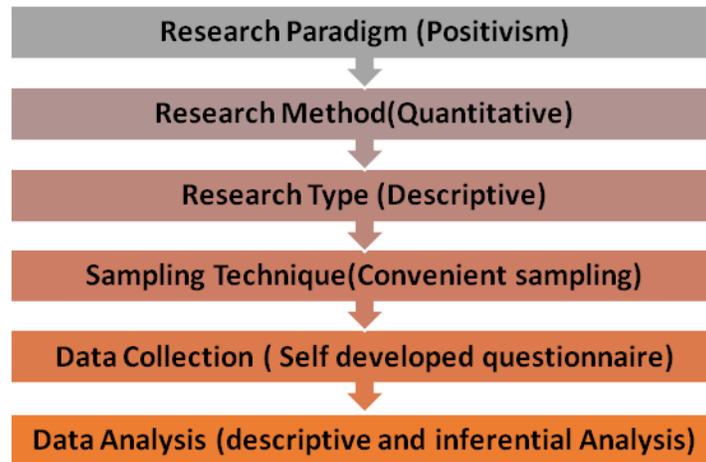
Major objectives of the study are to:

- Determine the level of support for disability as diversity in special education institutions as perceived by teachers.
- Determine the critical area of support which requires prompt action.
- Compare the level of support based on different demographic variables.

## **Questions**

1. What is the level of support for disability as diversity in special education institutions as perceived by teachers?
2. Which critical areas of support can be identified that require immediate attention?
3. What is the difference in the perceived level of support by the teacher on the basis of important demographic variables which area support is required more than criterion value?

## **Methodology**



## Research Design

The research followed the positivistic paradigm. Quantitative research approach was used to conduct this descriptive study-based survey method.

## Sample and Sampling Technique

The population of this study comprised of special education teachers serving in government special education institutions of Punjab. The sample of the study was 151, selected using convenient sampling technique from 16 districts of 05 divisions of Punjab province. District wise sample distribution and demographic distribution is as follows.

Table 1

*Geographical distribution of the sample of the study*

Sr	Division	Districts	Freq	%
1		Kasur	37	24.5
2	Lahore	Lahore	45	29.8
3		Sheikupura	12	7.9
4		Nankana sahib	7	4.6
6		Okara	21	13.9
7	Sahiwal	Sahiwal	5	3.3
8		Pakpattan	3	2.0

9		Gujranwala	1	0.7
10	Gujranwala	Sialkot	2	1.3
11		Mandi Bahauddin	2	1.3
12	Bahawalpur	Bahawalpur	1	.7
13		Vehari	2	1.3
14	D.G.Khan	Rajanpur	1	0.7
15		D.G.Khan	6	4.0
5	Faisalabad	Faisalabad	5	3.3
16	Rawalpindi	Rawalpindi	1	0.7
Total			151	100.0

Distribution of the sample of the study based on different demographic variables is given below:-

Table 2

*Frequency distribution of demographic variables*

Variable	Categories	Freq	%
Gender	Male	20	13.2
	Female	131	86.8
Designation	JSET	70	46.4
	SSET	81	53.6
	0-5 Years	58	38.4
	6-10 Years	49	32.5
	11-15 Years	37	24.5
Experience	16-20 Years and more	7	4.6

### Hypothetical Framework

The instrument of the study was based on the following support components as mentioned in the index of inclusion.



## **Instrument**

A questionnaire consisting of 25 items against 7 indicators was developed based on a hypothetical framework on the pattern described in index of inclusion and used to collect data. Percentage scale was used for responses.

## **Validity & Reliability**

The instrument was validated by experts and peers. The pilot study of the scale was conducted on a small sample of 30 special education teachers to estimate the reliability of test items. Reliability of the instrument was calculated by using Cronbach's Alpha model through SPSS Software (IBM Statistics version 21). Reliability of the instrument was .90.

## **Data Collection**

The researcher personally collected data by visiting the institutions and with the help of social media. At first the purpose of data collection and significance of the study was shared with administration asking prior permission for data collection. Questionnaire was sent to 200 teachers and 151 of them responded. The response rate was almost 75%.

## **Data Analysis**

Data obtained were organized, tabulated and analyzed by using SPSS. Besides calculating the frequency distributions of the demographic variables, descriptive statistics were used for data analysis. The analyses include mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum value. Inferential statistical analyses e.g. independent sample t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to compare different groups of respondents on different components. One sample t-test was used to compare the level of support on 50% criterion.

## Results

Descriptive and inferential statistics was used to analyze data as follow:

Table 3

*Ranking based on average mean*

Sr	Component	Average Mean
C5	Co-ordination among support	2.98
C7	Maximize attendance Rate	3.12
C4	Promote social cohesion	3.30
C3	Welcoming for newcomers	3.32
C6	Barrier free education	3.38
C1	Open Access	3.43
C2	Buildings are accessible	3.47

Table 3 describes the descriptive analysis of the different components based on the mean and standard deviation. Table indicates that co-ordination among support (Mean = 2.98) is the most deficient component in special education institutions needs immediate attention after that the maximize attendance rate (Mean = 3.12), Promote social cohesion (Mean = 3.30), welcoming for new comers (Mean = 3.32), Barrier free education (Mean= 3.38), Open Access (Mean= 3.43), Buildings are accessible (Mean=3.47) are also required improvement.

Table 4

*Comparison of support level with given criteria*

Components	Mean	SD	DF	t	Sig.	Test Value (50%)
Open Access	10.28	2.24	150	15.264	.000	7.5
Buildings are accessible	6.95	1.84	150	13.006	.000	5
Welcoming for newcomers	6.64	1.65	150	12.203	.000	5
Promote social cohesion	13.21	2.84	150	13.864	.000	10
Co-ordination among support	23.87	5.14	150	9.239	.000	20
Barrier free education	10.13	2.26	150	14.310	.000	7.5
Maximize attendance Rate	9.36	2.19	150	10.414	.000	7.5

The result of Table (4) shows that the average score is greater than criterion value. There is significant difference between the average perception of special education teachers about Open Access and 50% criteria value (Mean =10.28., SD = 2.24, t = 15.264, df = 150, sig. = 0.000, test value = 7.5), buildings are accessible (Mean =6.95., SD = 1.84, t = 13.006, df = 150, sig. = 0.000, test value = 5),welcoming for new comers (Mean =6.64., SD = 1.65, t = 12.203, df = 150, sig. = 0.000, test value = 5), promote social cohesion (Mean =13.21., SD = 2.84, t = 13.864, df = 150, sig. = 0.000, test value = 10),co-ordination among support (Mean =23.87, SD = 5.14, t = 9.239, df = 150, sig. = 0.000, test value = 20), Barrier free education (Mean =10.13., SD = 2.26, t = 14.310, df = 150, sig. = 0.000, test value = 7.5),maximize attendance rate (Mean =9.36., SD = 2.19, t = 10.414, df = 150, sig. = 0.000, test value = 7.5).

## Independent Sample t-test

Independent sample t test (table 5) was used to compare the perception of respondents based on their designation.

Table 5

*Independent sample t-test comparing on the basis of designation*

Components	Designation	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)																																																																				
Open Access	JSET	70	10.36	2.127	.402	149	.688																																																																				
	SSET	81	10.21	2.338				Buildings are accessible	JSET	70	7.27	1.614	2.036	149	.044	SSET	81	6.67	1.981	Welcoming for newcomers	JSET	70	6.54	1.612	-.643	149	.521	SSET	81	6.72	1.683	Promote social cohesion	JSET	70	13.44	2.796	.955	149	.341	SSET	81	13.00	2.881	Co-ordination among support	JSET	70	24.11	5.151	.547	149	.585	SSET	81	23.65	5.160	Barrier free education	JSET	70	10.40	2.268	1.393	149	.166	SSET	81	9.89	2.230	Maximize attendance Rate)	JSET	70	9.13	2.265	1.195	149	.234
Buildings are accessible	JSET	70	7.27	1.614	2.036	149	.044																																																																				
	SSET	81	6.67	1.981				Welcoming for newcomers	JSET	70	6.54	1.612	-.643	149	.521	SSET	81	6.72	1.683	Promote social cohesion	JSET	70	13.44	2.796	.955	149	.341	SSET	81	13.00	2.881	Co-ordination among support	JSET	70	24.11	5.151	.547	149	.585	SSET	81	23.65	5.160	Barrier free education	JSET	70	10.40	2.268	1.393	149	.166	SSET	81	9.89	2.230	Maximize attendance Rate)	JSET	70	9.13	2.265	1.195	149	.234	SSET	81	9.56	2.121								
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	SSET	81	9.56	2.121																																																																							

The independent sample t-test (table 5) shows that there is significant difference between the perception of Junior Special Education Teachers (JSETs) and Senior Special Education Teachers (SSETs) about “accessibility of buildings” ( $t = 2.066$ , Sig.  $.041 =$ ,  $Mean_{JSET} = 5.27$ ,  $Mean_{SSET} = 4.67$ ). Perception of JSETs was better than SSETs. No significant difference between JSETs and SSETs on other components.

## Analysis of Variance

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine the difference in perception of the respondents based on their experience.

Table 6

*Comparison based on experience*

Components	Variances	df	F	Sig.
Open Access	Between Groups	3	.045	.987
	Within Groups	147		
	Total	150		
Accessibility of buildings	Between Groups	3	3.487	.017
	Within Groups	147		
	Total	150		
Welcoming for newcomers	Between Groups	3	.949	.419
	Within Groups	147		
	Total	150		
Promote social cohesion	Between Groups	3	1.239	.298
	Within Groups	147		
	Total	150		
Co-ordination among support	Between Groups	3	1.528	.210
	Within Groups	147		
	Total	150		
Barriers free education	Between Groups	3	3.242	.024
	Within Groups	147		
	Total	150		
Maximize attendance rate	Between Groups	3	1.271	.287
	Within Groups	147		
	Total	150		

Results of ANOVA test table (6) shows that there is significant difference among special education teacher's perception based on their experience about "accessibility of buildings" ( $F = 3.487$ ,  $Sig. = .017$ ) & "Barrier free education" ( $F = 3.242$ ,  $Sig. = .024$ ). However, there is no significant difference among special education teacher's perception based on their experience about the rest of five components.

Table 7

*Post hoc multiple comparisons based on experience*

Dependent Variable	Working Experience (I)	Working Experience (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Accessibility of Buildings	16-20 Years and more	0-5 Years	-1.978*	.007
		6-10 Years	-1.551*	.034
		11-15 Years	-2.208*	.003
Barriers free education	11-15 Years	0-5 Years	-1.200*	.011
		6-10 Years	-1.409*	.004

According to table 7, there was significant difference among the perception of special education teachers having maximum experience i.e. 16-20 years and above than the perception of teacher having lesser experience about the accessibility of the buildings. Teachers with less experience have positive perception than teachers having more experience.

Similarly, teachers having 11-15 years have poor perception about the component related to Barriers free education as compared to teachers having 0-5 years and 6-10 years of experience respectively.

## Findings

Major findings of the study show that “Co-ordination among support” is the component which needs to address most after that maximize attendance rate, promote social cohesion, welcoming for newcomers, barriers in learning are reduced and open access is need to focus. There is significant difference in the teacher’s perception and given criterion i.e. 50%. Average perception of the teachers about is significantly better than the given criteria accept coordination among supports. Teachers showed positive perception about level of support for including disability as diversity. There is no significant difference in the perception of respondents about level of support for including disability as diversity based on designation. There is no significant difference in the perception of

respondents about level of support for including disability as diversity based and job experience.

## **Discussion**

This study has focused to know the level of support for disability as diversity provided by special educational institutions and which area is needed to be focused. Teachers of special education institutions who were conveniently sampled in Punjab, Pakistan, showed positive perception towards including disability as diversity. They clearly describe that over all the level of support in special education institutions is better only “coordination among support services” is missing badly. However, maximize attendance rate, promote social cohesion, welcoming for newcomers, barriers in learning are reduced and open access is as well need to focus for improvement. And their perception is not dependent on the designation or experience about the accessibility of buildings.

An exploratory research design study was conducted to discover information the factors distressing the quality of Special Education Centers by Tassawar (2019) endorsed the finding of this study. The said exploratory design research also found coordination and collaboration missed. According to teacher’s perception to create a learning environment there is needed to identify the collaborative learning needs. Teachers and heads also emphasis that Government should provide purposely built buildings for special education centers.

Another research study was carried out to explore the impact of school facilities on teachers and students’ outcomes. The results of this study found extremely perplexing to assist special children without adequate services and resources (Center for Evaluation and Education Policy CEEPA, 2015). An exploratory study investigates the situation of information accessibility for students with disabilities (SWDs) in Lahore city of Pakistan concluded that the special education institutions do not dignified the support (Awais & Ameen, 2015). A research study in Saudi Arabia was conducted to identify the current situation about the provision of special education services. This study found special education

programs lack in necessary related services and have limited educational placements (Alnahdi, 2014).

## **Conclusions**

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that over all the level of support in special education institutions is better if taking 50% benchmark accept “coordination among support services” is missing badly. However, “maximize attendance rate”, “promote social cohesion”, “welcoming for newcomers”, “barriers free education” and “open access” is needed to address for improving the level of support. Perception of teachers about the level of support for including disability as diversity is not dependent on the designation or experience of respondents accept about the “accessibility of buildings”. Teachers showed positive perception towards including disability as diversity.

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