



Study of Regular Teachers' Attitude towards Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in District Sonapat (Haryana)

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Abstract

Education for all children aged from 6 to 14 years is a fundamental human right and a pillar of personal and societal development. Every child deserves access to quality education irrespective of caste, class, culture and gender. Unfortunately, the children with special needs are treated unwanted and segregated from society. Inclusive Education is a new approach towards educating all the children irrespective of their mental or physical abilities. Teachers play a crucial role to promote inclusive education. Their acceptance towards children with special needs and special education is highly required for the successful implementation of inclusive education. This paper aims at assessing teacher's attitude and knowledge in imparting inclusive education in the state of Haryana. The study was conducted in district Sonapat, state of Haryana. A total of 100 teachers from government schools were interviewed while using a semi-structured interview schedule on attitude and awareness. The result of the study indicated that, though school teachers' attitude is positive and they are in support of inclusive education for students with special needs yet due to lack of training on special education, teachers have neglected attitude towards children with special needs. For the successful inclusion, it is recommended that, there is a need for in-services training for school teachers on management of students with special needs, need for the best school policies, and support from the society, parents of children with special needs is required. The role of special education was also found instrumental and pioneer to enhance inclusion in schools.

Keywords: Attitude, Primary School Teacher, normal/integrated schools, Inclusive Education, Disability

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Introduction

Education for all children aged from 6 to 14 years is a fundamental human right and a pillar of personal and societal development, 86th amendment of the constitution Act in 2002 stated. The constitution of India provides equality, freedom and dignity to individuals including persons with disabilities. Article 45 of the Indian Constitution provides free and compulsory education to all children below 14 years. Every child deserves access to quality education irrespective of caste, class, culture and gender. Unfortunately, the children with special needs are treated unwanted and segregated from other children. Inclusive Education is a new approach towards educating all the children irrespective of their mental or physical abilities, by ensuring they have equal access to quality education in a supportive and non-discriminatory environment. The government of India attempts to involve the children with special needs into various educational initiatives such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA, 2001).

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2005) also emphasized the implementation of inclusive education policies across the country's education system. Teachers are the key instrument of any education system. Teachers in inclusive education are expected to promote positive behavior and create a safe and supportive learning environment, including positive reinforcement, strategies to encourage good behavior and discourage negative behavior. Similarly, the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education is a significant factor in the success of inclusive education. Most of the Studies stated that in India awareness about inclusive education is low, especially in rural areas, the inclusion of children with special needs is a challenging task at administrator level because of their attitude towards special children.

According to the Census (2011), In India around 2,68,10,557 individuals are living with such kinds of disabilities, comprising 1,49,86,202 males and 1,18,24,355 females. Speaking about Haryana 1.9 % of the total population was found to have disabilities in 2011. The disability statistics reveal that 16.57% of individuals experience vision related issues, while 23.15% face hearing impairments, additionally 4.37% have speech problems. Mental retardation affects 6.02% of the population, while 3.24% are impacted by mental illness, 47,250 individuals are reported to have multiple disabilities. It shows that, despite having a growing and sustained economy, the state faces challenges to deal with the growing concern of disabilities. The principle of equality and human rights demands equal opportunities for all and education is a key, provided it is accessible to all. Teachers of any educational institute play a vital role. Their positive attitude, perception towards children with special needs is as relevant as towards inclusive education.

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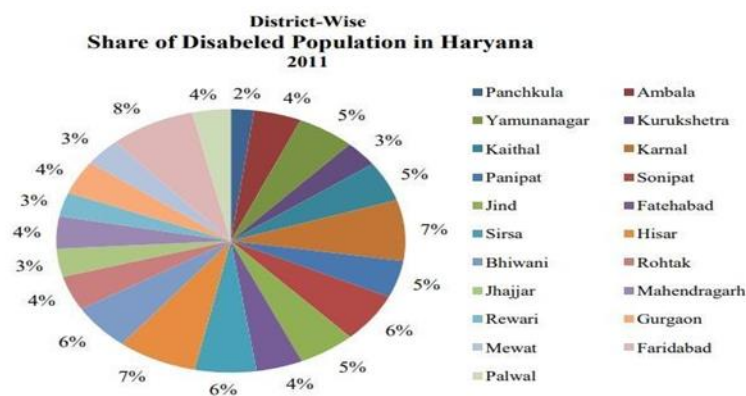
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Graph 1:



The disabled population in Haryana, across its districts in 2011. Faridabad has the highest (8%) of the total disabled population in the state, followed by Sirsa and Bhiwani (7%). Districts like Hisar, Rohtak, Mahendragarh, and Gurgaon have moderate shares of 6% each. Jind, Rewari, and Mewat contribute 5% each, while districts such as Kurukshetra, Karnal, Panipat, Sonipat, and Fatehabad each represent 4%. Smaller shares are observed in Yamunanagar, Palwal, and Jhajjar, with 3% each, and the smallest percentage comes from Panchkula, which accounts for only 2%. This data highlights regional variations, with some districts showing a significantly higher concentration of the disabled population, emphasizing the need to focus resources and programs for inclusive education in those areas. This study is significant as it focuses on understanding the attitudinal barriers of teachers toward inclusive education, which remain a critical obstacle in achieving equitable education for children with disabilities. Teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs directly influence their willingness and ability to adopt inclusive practices. Negative attitudes or misconceptions about inclusive education can lead to resistance in implementing these practices.

Review of literature

Inclusive Education refers to providing to all students, including those with significant disabilities, equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services, with the needed supplemental services in order to prefer students with productive level as full members of the society. Attitude which refers to a state of a readiness, based on past experience, which guides, biases or otherwise influences our behavior. Attitude is an emotional reaction towards a person or a thing.

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The principle of inclusive education was first endorsed at the 1994 World Conference on "Special Needs Education: Access and Quality" held in Salamanca, Spain. In India, the government has consistently incorporated children with special needs into various educational initiatives, including the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA, 2001). Inclusive education is concerned with removing all barriers to learning, and with the participation of all learners vulnerable to exclusion and marginalization. It is a strategic approach designed to facilitate learning success for all children. It addresses the common goals of decreasing and overcoming all exclusion from the human right to education, at least at the elementary level and enhancing access, participation and learning success in quality basic education for all 2000 Bulletin, UNESCO NO.32, 1998.

National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986-92): In 1986, the Indian Government formulated the National Policy on Education for all government schools and articulated a need to integrate students with disabilities. It emphasized that whenever feasible, the education of children with motor handicapped and other mild disabilities should be provided in regular schools. It also emphasized the need to restructure primary teacher training programs to prepare teachers to deal with the special difficulties of children with disabilities.

Additionally, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2005) emphasized the implementation of inclusive education policies across the country's education system. Teachers play a key role in inclusive education. Teachers in inclusive education should promote positive behavior and create a safe and supportive learning environment. They should also use positive reinforcement strategies to encourage good behavior and discourage negative behavior. The attitude of teachers towards inclusive education as a significant factor in the success of inclusive education. The awareness about inclusive education in school in India is still at infancy in rural areas mainly and the success of such education of students with disability has been a big challenge for the administrators who are doubtful about imparting education to both normal & disabled children in the same classroom. This study will be focused on the perceived teacher's attitude towards inclusive education in rural schools.

According to UN (SDGs) Sustainable Development Goal 4 (2015): Part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it commits to "ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all." Inclusive education contributes to sustainable development by: Equipping all students, including those with disabilities, with knowledge and skills to participate fully in society and the economy. Bridging gaps in educational opportunities, fostering social cohesion, and addressing discrimination. Building a more skilled, diverse workforce that drives innovation and economic progress. Encouraging acceptance, diversity, and mutual respect, creating a more inclusive and sustainable society.

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The Salamanca Statement (1994) adopted at the World Conference on Special Needs Education, this declaration emphasizes the need for inclusive education systems where mainstream schools accommodate all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions. World disability day, known as the international day of the person with disabilities (IDPD), is observed annually on December 3rd.

Research highlights significant inconsistencies in the implementation of inclusive education in India despite legal provisions ensuring free education for children with disabilities. Studies point to critical gaps in teacher preparedness, resources, and attitudes, which play a crucial role in the success of inclusive practices (Sharma et al., 2016).

Ajay K. Das et al. (2013) revealed that 70% of regular school teachers in Delhi lacked both training and experience in special education, coupled with limited access to support services. Factors influencing these attitudes include teacher efficacy, experience, training, class size, curriculum flexibility, and prior exposure to individuals with disabilities (Avramidis & Burden, 2000).

Tripathi and Kapri (2019) found that female teachers and urban school teachers held more positive attitudes toward inclusion compared to their male and rural counterparts. Positive attitudes are associated with a greater focus on individual needs, while negative attitudes can lead to resistance to inclusion (Forlin & Sharma, 2007). In summary, existing research underscores the pivotal role of teacher attitudes, training, and support in the success of inclusive education. The findings highlight the need for improved training programs, better support systems, and strategies to address demographic and contextual differences in attitudes toward inclusion. (Razalli, Hashim, Mamat, & Ariffin, 2020) This study explores collaboration between special education teachers (SET) and mainstream teachers (MT) for implementing inclusive education in schools, focusing on three key areas: knowledge, attitudes, and willingness to collaborate. A survey using a questionnaire was conducted among 70 SET and MT in Hulu Langat, Selangor, Malaysia, selected through purposive sampling. The findings highlight the importance of improving collaboration through enhanced knowledge, readiness, and attitudes for effective inclusive education.

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Significance of the Study

The significance of the study suggests the effective implementation of inclusive education by addressing teachers' attitudes—a critical human factor essential for creating an inclusive and equitable education system. By addressing these barriers, the study strives to enhance educational access and outcomes for children with disabilities, thereby hindering the success of inclusive education initiatives.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the demographic background of teachers in government schools of district Sonapat, Haryana.
2. To assess the attitudes of teachers toward inclusive education in government schools in rural areas of Sonipat district, Haryana.
3. To explore the role special education in promoting inclusive education.makes learning interactive. By integrating Avaz into classroom activities, we have observed increased student engagement and participation.

Research Methodology

This study comprises a mixed method approach, aimed at assessing the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education for children with special needs. A total number of 100 (35 female teachers and 65 male teachers working in the Government schools in rural areas Rai block, district Sonipat) were selected. The semi structured interview schedule was used to assess the teacher's attitude, awareness towards children with special needs. The Rai block was randomly selected through cluster sampling. The results of the study reveal significant differences in teachers' attitudes based on their gender, age, educational experiences., teaching experiences, class size and number of disabled students in their class.

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Result and Discussion

The demographic background of the respondents (Table-1)

Gender of respondent	Frequency	Percent
Female	35	35.0
Male	65	65.0
Total	100	100.0
Educational qualification	Frequency	Percent
Graduate	14	14.0
Post Graduate	85	85.0
PhD	1	1.0
Total	100	100.0
Age of respondent	Frequency	Percent
20-30	5	5.0
31-40	38	38.0
41-50	57	57.0
Total	100	100.0
Teaching experience	Frequency	Percent
1-5 Years	3	3.0
6-10 Years	44	44.0
Above 10 Years	53	53.0
Total	100	100.0
Class size	Frequency	Percent
18-24	52	52.0
25-31	14	14.0
32-38	31	31.0
39-45	3	3.0
Total	100	100.0
No. of children with special needs	Frequency	Percent
1-3	76	76.0
4-6	24	24.0
Total	100	100.0

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In the present study, the majority of respondents are male (65%), while females constitute (35%). (85%) were postgraduates, graduates (14%) and only PhDs (1%). The largest age group is 41-50 years (57%), followed by 31-40 years (38%), and 20-30 years (5%). More than half of the respondents (53%) have over 10 years of teaching experience. (44%) have 6-10 years of experience, while only 3% have 1-5 years of experience. The majority of the respondents (76%) have 1-3 students with special needs in their classrooms, the remaining 24% have 4-6 students with special needs.

Teachers strongly support inclusive education, their attitudes varied based on the specific needs of students. Female respondents tended to have slightly more positive attitudes toward inclusion. Key findings include, high support was observed for including students who are shy and withdrawn, academically behind by one year, or require individualized functional academic programs. Teachers were found moderately supportive for students having challenges in speaking and having behavior issues. According to them, they need more time to understand. Significant disagreement was observed regarding the inclusion of students who cannot move independently, those who cannot hear, conversational speech, and those who are physically aggressive. Both genders overwhelmingly supported inclusion for students frequently absent from school, reflecting optimism in managing attendance-related challenges.

The study highlights generational differences and shared attitudes toward inclusive education for students with diverse needs. Younger respondents (20–30 years) consistently exhibit stronger support for inclusion compared to older age groups. The results reveal positive attitudes toward including students with mild challenges (e.g., academic delays, shyness, speech difficulties) and mixed responses for students with behavioral or severe needs (e.g., Braille users, aggressive behavior). Safety, classroom harmony, and the feasibility of accommodations appear to influence attitudes. Teachers with more experience tend to support inclusion more, whereas those with less experience. Teachers favor inclusion for less disruptive students (shy, verbal issues) rather show less support for inclusion, especially for challenging behaviors. Teachers show the strongest support for including students with mild academic delays, speech difficulties, self-help needs, and those who are shy or withdrawn. There is hesitance to include students who are physically aggressive, disrupt activities, or have significant physical dependency. (e.g., Braille users) Data reveals that teachers feel unprepared for students who require specialized resources, such as those who use Braille, are hearing impaired, or have severe speech or mobility needs.

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Findings of the Study

The findings show that teachers are generally open to including students with mild learning delays, speech issues, or those who need help with daily tasks. However, they are more concerned about students with behavioral problems, physical needs. Another recurring issue was teachers' sense of unpreparedness in supporting students with specialized needs, such as those who require Braille or assistive communication devices. Do you think that special education is mandatory to deal with students with special needs? If yes, how? Majority of the respondents expressed that training in special education is instrumental for teachers as special educators can effectively handle and deal with severe disabilities such as hearing loss or serious communication difficulties. Teachers are comfortable with students who need minor adjustments in the regular classroom, but they feel unprepared to support students with more specialized needs, pointing to a lack of resources and training. While the collected data does not directly focus on socio-demographic characteristics, additional information such as age, teaching experience, and education level could be gathered to complement the study. These socio-demographic factors will help provide context to the teachers' attitudes and perceptions of inclusive education, allowing for a deeper understanding of how personal background influences their perspectives on inclusive practices. The findings directly address the attitudinal barriers teachers face when considering behavioral problems, physical dependency, and the lack of resources (e.g., for Braille users or those with severe hearing impairments) are identified as major challenges. These barriers are crucial for understanding the limitations in implementing inclusive education in schools.

Conclusion

The study on teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education in government schools of rural Sonipat district reveals a generally positive remark. Students with mild academic delays, speech difficulties, and those needing self-help skills are accepted. Teachers are open to adapting their teaching methods to support students who require manageable adjustments. However, there is significant hesitation regarding students with severe impairments, behavioral issues, or physical dependency, such as those requiring Braille or having hearing impairments. This suggests a gap in resources, training, and support for students with more specialized needs.

The findings highlight the importance of providing additional professional development, resources, and support systems to help teachers effectively include all students in regular classrooms. The role of special education was found highly significant as teachers trained with special education tend to promote inclusive education then normal teachers. The findings of the present study can be used as a source of information to special schools, inclusive schools.

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Overall results of the study show that integrated school teachers are having a more positive attitude towards inclusion of students. This impact is a positive sign for implementing inclusive education for students with mental retardation. In normal schools one of the most important factors for the success of inclusive education is the acceptance and positive attitude of the normal school teachers towards inclusion.

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