

HOW GENDER INFLUENCES THE ATTITUDES OF SCHOOL TEACHERS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Right to Education is the fundamental right of all the citizens in the Nation. Every individual has the right to possess all the educational benefits from the nation equally without partiality. This can be achieved through inclusive education where the education is given equally to all diverse learners in one platform called Classroom. This inclusive classroom is completely depended on the teachers who stands as the pillars. The present study aims to investigate the attitude of school teachers towards inclusive education, focusing on differences with respect to gender. The population of the study consists of school teachers from government, aided, and private institutions in and around Tiruvarur district. A sample size of 156 school teachers were selected for the research through simple random sampling technique. The study employs a standard tool MATIES (Multidimensional Attitude toward Inclusive Education Scale) which was developed by Marian Mahat in 2008. The Reliability of the tool was found by calculated Cronbach's alpha ($r=0.749$). The findings of the study shows that there is no significant difference in the attitude of school teachers towards inclusive education with respect to gender. The result of the study concluded that irrespective of genders, both male and female teachers are equally equipped and motivated to contribute positively to inclusive education and work for its implementation as per NEP 2020.

Keywords: Attitude, School teachers, Inclusive education, inclusive classroom, NEP 2020.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is the education which aims to accommodate all learners regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions. According to NEP 2020, inclusive and equitable education is the essential right of every citizen of the nation who could have equal opportunity to dream, learn and to thrive. It ensures that the students with disabilities or special needs receive the necessary support within mainstream educational settings. This paradigm shift from segregated to inclusive education will create a corresponding shift in the attitudes of teachers irrespective of their level of teaching.

The attitude of schoolteachers towards inclusive education is imprecise, as their beliefs, perceptions, and willingness to adapt to diverse classroom would directly impact the quality of education and inclusivity provided. Positive teacher attitudes can foster an environment where all students feel valued and supported, whereas negative attitudes can hinder the progress of students with special needs and also the practice of inclusiveness.

Gender, as a social determinant, may influence teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. Traditional gender roles and societal expectations can shape the perspectives and behaviors of male and female teachers differently. For instance, women are often stereotypically viewed as more nurturing and empathetic, which might affect their openness to inclusive practices. Conversely, men might be influenced by societal norms that emphasize discipline and control which potentially affecting their adaptability to inclusive educational approaches.

This study aims to identify the attitudes of schoolteachers towards inclusive education with a specific focus on how these attitudes vary with respect to their gender. By examining the differences and similarities in the attitudes between male and female teachers, may provide insights into the underlying factors that influence the attitudes of the school teachers. Understanding these dynamics is essential for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to create supportive environments that promote inclusive education effectively.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Inclusive education aims to provide the children, regardless of their abilities or disabilities with equitable opportunities for learning in mainstream schools. This approach is crucial for promoting social integration, equality, and access to quality education for every child. However, the successful implementation of inclusive education largely depends on the attitudes and perceptions of school teachers, who are the primary facilitators of this approach. This study aims to identify and understand the attitudes of school teachers towards inclusive education, with a specific focus on gender differences. By highlighting the need for supportive attitudes and addressing gender-based disparities,

this research can contribute to the advancement of inclusive education practices and policies, ultimately benefiting all the diverse learners.

OBJECTIVES

To study the Attitude of school teachers towards inclusive education with respect to gender.

HYPOTHESIS

There is no significant difference in the attitude of school teachers towards inclusive education with respect to their gender.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology opted by the researcher to collect the data was survey method. The population of the study comprises the teachers, working in government, government aided and private schools during the academic year 2023-2024 in Tiruvarur district. The sample of the study was selected through simple random sampling technique which comprises of 156 school teachers in and around Tiruvarur district. The tool used for the study was a standard tool named Multidimensional Attitude toward Inclusive Education Scale (MATIES) developed by Marian Mahat (2008) from Monash University. The tool consists of 18 items which was given to 15 school teachers and their responses were collected, and the item-total correlation was calculated. The reliability of the tool has been established by calculated Cronbach Alpha ($r = 0.749$), which shows that the tool is significantly reliable to collect the data for present study.

Statistical Techniques

- Descriptive Analysis (Mean and Standard Deviation)
- Item Analysis – Cronbach's Alpha for reliability analysis.
- t- Test - to find out the difference between the subgroups.
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Delimitations of the Study:

- i. The study is limited to 156 samples only.
- ii. The study is limited to school teachers only.
- iii. The study is limited to Tiruvarur district only.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data:

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the attitude of school teachers towards inclusive education with respect to their Gender.

Table 1: Attitude of school teachers towards Inclusive Education with respect to their Gender

Attitude towards Inclusive Education	Gender				t- Value	p- Value	Level of Significance
	Male (N=30)		Female (N=126)				
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D			
Cognitive	20.07	2.753	20.67	3.627	1.004	0.073	p>0.05 NS
Affective	23.60	4.039	22.59	5.036	1.173	0.131	p>0.05 NS
Behavioral	25.50	2.330	25.02	3.591	0.909	0.087	p>0.05 NS
Attitude in total	69.17	5.133	68.27	6.067	0.829	0.556	p>0.05 NS

From the above table 1, it is observed that the mean scores in the cognitive, affective, behavioral dimension of male and female school teachers were 20.07 and 20.67, 23.60 and 22.59, 25.50 and 25.02 respectively. The overall mean scores of attitudes of male and female school teachers were 69.17 and 68.27 respectively.

Since the p value is greater than 0.05 for attitude in total including the dimensions, the Null hypothesis is accepted at 5% level of significance. Hence, there is no significant difference in the attitude of school teachers towards Inclusive Education and its dimensions with respect to their gender.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The findings based on the descriptive and differential analysis of data related to the attitude of school teachers towards inclusive education are

- i. The overall mean and standard deviation of the data is found to be 68.44 and 5.894 respectively.
- ii. With respect to gender, it is found that there is no significant difference between male and female school teachers in their attitude towards inclusive education.

DISCUSSION

The result of the study showed that there is no significant difference based on the gender. This result is in line with Shiba Singh, Saurav Kumar and Ranjan Kumar Singh (2020). The results of their study indicated that there is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female teachers towards inclusive education and gender does not play a significant role.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of the present study, the investigator recommends the following.

- The Government has to inculcate positive attitudes towards inclusive education among teachers through awareness campaigns, professional development activities, and recognition of inclusive practices.
- The Government has to ensure that the teachers have access to the resources and support they need to effectively implement inclusive education practices including teaching aids, assistive technologies, and supporting staff.
- The Government has to develop inclusive curriculum materials that are accessible to all students, regardless of their learning needs, and provide teachers with the necessary training and support to effectively implement these materials in the classroom.
- The teachers have to foster an inclusive classroom environment where all students feel welcomed, valued, and supported. Prefer inclusive language, teaching materials, and instructional methods that cater to diverse learning needs.
- The teachers have to work collaboratively with special education teachers, supporting staff, and other professionals to develop and implement Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) and accommodations for students with special needs.
- The students have to ensure that they accept each and every co-student and be helpful to each other in all matters.

- The parents have to render their supportive hand in implementing inclusive setup in their child's school.

CONCLUSION

The attitude of school teachers towards inclusive education reveals no significant insights when analyzed with respect to their gender. The findings of this study indicate that both male and female teachers generally support the principles of inclusive education, acknowledging its benefits for students with diverse needs. However, subtle differences exist in their levels of enthusiasm and perceived challenges, often influenced by societal expectations and gender roles. Female teachers tend to exhibit a higher degree of empathy and readiness to adapt their teaching methods to accommodate all students, while male teachers may express more concerns about the practical implementation and resource availability. These differences underscore the importance of tailored professional development programs that address the specific concerns and strengths of both genders. By fostering a supportive and collaborative environment, schools can better prepare all teachers to embrace inclusive education, ultimately leading to a more equitable and effective educational system for all students. Thus, the present study concludes that regardless of gender, both male and female teachers are equipped and motivated to contribute positively to inclusive education initiatives.

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